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Editorial

Disability sport: Changing lives, changing perceptions

Ian Brittain[1], **Eli A. Wolff[2]**

[1] Coventry University, UK
[2] Brown University, USA

Corresponding author email: aa8550@coventry.ac.uk; eli_wolff@brown.edu

Welcome to this special edition of the Journal of Sport for Development (JSFD) entitled *Disability Sport: Changing lives, changing perceptions,* which was inspired by a conference of the same name held at Coventry University, UK in September 2014. The aim of the conference was to bring together practitioners and academics working in the field of disability and Paralympic sport, begin a dialogue and create opportunities for future collaboration via knowledge exchange in both formal presentations and informal discussions. This Special Issue of JSFD continues the conference's goals by providing insight into the numerous ways in which sport can play a positive role in the lives of people with disabilities.

The Special Issue covers a range of topics, including social change, inclusion, disability sport marketing policies, negotiating disability, identity and belonging through sport, and the use of critical pedagogy to develop and promote inclusive practice with the higher education sector with regard to sport. These topics are discussed in various sporting, cultural and geographical contexts and highlight the great potential for future research in this emerging field. In the wider field of sport for development there is a steadily growing body of work regarding the significance of sport within society and its potential impacts, particularly in developing 'better' citizens with regard to health, behaviour, and productivity.[1]

There is also a growing body of work regarding the use of sport in conflict zones as a means of development and brokering peace. However, there appears to be little work that addresses these issues regarding the use of sport for people with a disability and the role sport might play in overcoming them—e.g. the re-integration of people with

disabilities into society, the potential impact of sport on perceptions of people with disabilities within the wider community, and the role that a change in perceptions can play in aiding the re-integration process. In this editorial, we seek to introduce readers to issues faced by people with disabilities in these regions. We highlight a lack of both programmes using sport for development for people with disabilities in these regions and, as a result, a lack of research in this area.

People, particularly children, with disabilities do not have equal opportunities and equal access regarding most aspects of life. This lack of access includes basic services (especially education and health), a result of physical inaccessibility to the buildings, lack of information in adapted formats (e.g. braille), and discriminatory behaviour within society. In addition, people with disabilities tend to suffer disproportionately during and after conflict situations. They are often the most exposed to risks such as physical and sexual violence, exploitation, harassment and discrimination—a reality particularly true for females.[2] Research by the United Nations indicates that violence against children with disabilities occurs at annual rates at least 1.7 times greater than for their non-disabled peers.[3] Finally, individuals with a disability often lack options for making a living and, therefore, transcending poverty, which often means they either remain a financial burden on their families or are forced to beg to make a living.

Disability and poverty are also closely linked with insecure living conditions, lack of access to basic services, malnutrition, and other dimensions of poverty. These links not only lead to disabilities, but also make life much harder for those who are born with or acquire disabilities as a result

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of accidents or conflict. In addition, the perceived stigma attached not only to the person with a disability but also their families can cause parents in some countries to attempt to conceal their disabled children. The rehabilitation of children with conflict-induced disabilities includes a set of additional issues such as the context of poverty, social stigma, cultural values and traditions prevalent with the society under investigation. Moreover, there are numerous priorities for reconstruction in post-conflict affected environments and people with disabilities, especially children, are far less likely to have access to decision making processes, means of production, and financial capital, causing them to tend to be further marginalized within society.

Armed conflicts often result in a high level of acquired disabilities caused by small arms and light weapons including anti-personnel landmines. Youth, both as civilians and combatants, are one of the most affected groups. It is often the case that there are no adequate socio-economic services or opportunities in post-conflict environments to help deal with the many issues raised by these conflict-induced impairments. However, research relating to the impact of conflict-induced disability, particularly with regard to children, is scarce. The lack of research in this area may be partly due to the difficulties of carrying out research in the often challenging situation of a post-conflict society.[4] It is equally important not to overlook the challenges faced by those who received their disabilities as a result of non-conflict accidents or congenital disabilities; otherwise, there would be a risk of marginalising further an already marginalised group.

One of the key issues faced by people with disabilities around the world, but particularly in conflict and post-conflict zones is exclusion from the rest of society. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) broadly define social exclusion as a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live.[5] Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. DFID identifies social exclusion as a priority because it both causes poverty and impedes poverty reduction. Moreover, poverty reduction policies rarely reach socially excluded groups unless they are specifically designed to include them.

DFID highlights that social exclusion is a leading cause of

conflict and insecurity. This finding relates strongly to people with disabilities in conflict zones in that they often become displaced from their villages and local communities—either forcibly or out of fear for their own safety—and often end up in internal displacement camps. However, once the resettlement process is underway, the devastation caused by the conflict in terms of the destruction of villages and infrastructure often mean that people with disabilities are one of the hardest groups to re-settle. These people with disabilities typically meet other people with disabilities in the camps that enable them to achieve some sort of camaraderie, which is preferable to the isolation they can feel in their own villages where they may be shunned or stigmatized by their acquired disability.[6] In short, life for people, particularly youth and children, with disabilities in a post-conflict environment often means marginalisation, exclusion, disparity, poverty and ostracisation.

There is a growing body of evidence that sport may have an effective role to play in improving challenges faced by people with disabilities broadly. The articles in this Special Issue add to this growing evidence base, highlighting the global scope of the subject of people with disabilities and sport for development. It addresses inclusion in grassroots and community settings as well as within large scale events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio 2016. It covers social inclusion and identity for individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities. The Issue further addresses considerations with respect to pedagogy as well as marketing concerns. Ultimately, this Special Issue serves as a testament to the emergence of people with disabilities within the sport for development space. However, further research and programs are needed to better understand the role of sport in these areas, particularly in post-conflict settings.

Beyond research initiatives, there is growing awareness, momentum and commitment for inclusive sport for development.[7] Paragraph 37 in the new United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reads:

"Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives."[8]

Further in the revised UNESCO Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport that was adopted in November of 2015, Article 11.3 states that

"Sport for development and peace initiatives should be inclusive, and culture-, gender-, age- and disability-sensitive, and include strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. They should encourage local ownership of projects and embody the same principles of sustainability and integrity as other physical education, physical activity and sport initiatives."[9]

We hope that this Special Issue can further contribute and make the case for inclusive sport for development in practice, policy and research.

In their introductory editorial to the very first edition of JSFD, Richards et al outlined the range of SFD research objectives including that of disability in terms of development, access, inclusion, and human rights of persons with disabilities using an evidence-based approach.[10] We feel that these comments resonate strongly with the issue of people with disabilities living in post-conflict zones and the potential utilization of sport for development as part of an overall strategy for their integration and inclusion within the rebuilding process for such societies. We also feel that the seven papers presented in this special edition provide a good introduction to the numerous ways sport impacts upon or intersects with the lives of people with disabilities and the huge potential and opportunities that the field offers for research that can also have a measurable and verifiable social impact.

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Call for Abstracts

Disability Sport: Why do we 'Dis' people's abilities? 27-29 June 2016, Coventry University, UK.

Following on from the success of the first two conferences held in 2012 and 2014, the Centre for Business in Society at Coventry University, UK will be hosting an international, inter-disciplinary conference for academics and practitioners.

The conference will focus on the use of disability sport as a tool for peace, development and social inclusion.

Further details can be found at: www.coventry.ac.uk/disabilitysportconference

Original Research

Adapted surfing as a tool to promote inclusion and rising disability awareness in Portugal

João Taborda Lopes[1]

[1] Coimbra Hospital and Universitary Centre, Pediatric Department, Portugal

Corresponding author email: joaotlopes@gmail.com

Abstract

Adapted surfing is an outdoor activity that takes place in naturally and constantly moving water and appears innovative compared to other traditional adapted sports (such as swimming or sailing). It has a wide approach that covers several areas of Occupational Performance[10] (ADL´s - Activities of Daily Living; Education/Work; Play, Leisure and Social Participation) as well as various physical, sensorial and psychosocial skills. Surfing can play a significant role in the lives of people with disabilities by promoting physical well-being, combating discrimination, building confidence, as well as playing an important role in the rehabilitation process. Adapted surfing is a complete, integral, therapeutic and inclusive activity due to its diverse features associated with performance in areas of occupational performance, performance skills and also different environmental contexts. We can identify four major factors that focus on the intervention through surfing: Aquatic Environment; Environment – Individual Interaction; Individual - Coach/Therapist Interaction; and also Group Interaction. Since 2012, the Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing – SURFaddict,® pioneered showcasing the value of surfing as an important therapeutic tool for people with various disabilities. Data was collected between May 2012 and December 2013. Nowadays surfing is finally being regarded as highly important not only by surfers, therapists and social workers but also by the general public and a number of politicians as a crucial instrument for social inclusion in Portugal.

Background

Sports, Disability and Discrimination

The physiological benefits of participation in sport and physical activity are widely recognized and well established in the research literature. Having a disability or impairment may prevent persons from participating in their social roles and being active members of their community.[1] According to Andrews' approach[2] involving the benefits of participation in sport identified in the literature, the evident benefits appear to be the indirect outcomes of the context and social interaction possible in sport rather than the direct outcome of participating in sport.

The long-term health benefits of sports have long been established for people with or without disabilities, but those who have some kind of disability tend to be marginalized members of society.[1, 3, 4] On the other hand, a review of the literature confirms that individuals, especially children and youngsters, tend to move to indoor spaces when they are upset or anxious.[5] The outdoors offers a rich landscape of sensory experiences that stimulate the whole body, whereas enclosed indoors environments have regulated air, temperature, sound, smell, and texture so the sensory range is much more limited.

People with disabilities are generally a very vulnerable group as they face stigma and discrimination at all levels of daily life. Their discrimination is caused by two major factors: (a) the characteristics of the disability itself and the impairment of the person experiencing trauma or disease, and (b) the specifics of the environment that creates physical and social-cultural barriers.[6]

Adapted Surfing as an Alternative Approach to Traditional Adapted Sports

As an outdoor sport and with water in the background in constant motion, surfing appears as a great option compared to traditional sports. It has a broader approach, covers several areas of occupational performance (ADL´s - Activities of Daily Living such as dressing, bathing/showering, personal hygiene and grooming, functional mobility, etc.; community mobility; safety and emergency maintenance; Education/Work and educational participation; Play, Leisure and Social Participation), as well as various physical (range of motion, balance, strength, etc.); sensorial (vestibular, taste, smell, proprioceptive, and touch functions) and psychosocial (affective/emotional, cognitive and perceptual) skills of the individual, in one single activity. [7, 8, 9] Adapted surfing can play a significant role in the life of a person with disabilities, just as for any individual. Sport can promote physical well being, combat discrimination, build confidence and a sense of security, while playing an important role in the healing and rehabilitation process for individuals affected by crisis, discrimination and marginalization. We will discuss the intervention of sports projects that aim to promote social inclusion as well as provide rehabilitation through surfing.

Surfing as a Sports Therapy Activity

Surfing is a a complete and integral activity when accounting for the numerous features associated with performance in areas of human occupation (ADL´s; Education/Work; Play, Leisure and Social Participation), performance skills (sensory, motor, emotional, cognitive, communication, and social), but also characteristics of the context (social, environment, and cultural). [7, 8, 9] Therefore, we can identify four major intervention factors centered on surfing: (a) The Aquatic Environment – Ocean (the physical properties of salt water); (b) Environment (beach/coastline) – Individual Interaction (sensory integration in an environment rich in stimuli); (c) Individual - Coach / Therapist Interaction (utilizes concepts like expressing feelings and emotions); and (d) Group Interaction (works concepts such as socialization, leadership and inter-help). [7, 8, 9]

The specific physical properties of the *Aquatic Environment* (open water – ocean) play an important role in functional rehabilitation (improving balance, strength and flexibility). It is highly stimulating (sensorial) and has a relaxing effect (motor). The absence of gravity in salt water improves mobility, which improves the cardio-respiratory function and is an integral muscular workout. Finally, the pleasure it provides is also an important factor.

Regarding the *Environment – Individual Interaction*, the beach and shoreline are environments with a wide range of stimuli (salt water, wet and dry sand, seaweed, rocks, aquatic fauna and flora), so it provides a wealthy approach in sensory integration terms. Considering this, we will describe in more detail some examples of the various types of sensory stimulation experiences in surfing: (a) *visual*: through the reflection and refraction of light on the ocean surface associated with the continuous motion of the waves; (b) *gustatory and olfactory*: by the taste of the intense saltiness of the oceanic water and the smell of the sea and algae that is more noticeable during low-tides; (c) *tactile and proprioceptive*: issues like buoyancy, sliding over the surface of the sea, the simple passage of the hands through the water as they paddle and take-off on the wave, or the tactile stimulation of the feet on the sand and on the surfboard deck; (d) *auditory*: through the sound of the waves and the movement of the sea; and (e) *vestibular*: by the constant imbalance and rebalance intrinsic to this activity.

In relation to the *Individual - Coach / Therapist Interaction*, the trust relationship between the instructor or therapist and the adapted surfer allows the individual to explore his/her intra-personal conflicts and find solutions. Expressing emotions and sharing feelings (from joy to frustration); non-verbal issues like look or gaze, physical presence, touch, movement; engaging in intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions; and improving self-concept and self-esteem are all part of these relationships.

Concerning *Group Interaction*, although surfing is not team sport, adapted surfing is done by a group of people with and without disabilities, which contributes in a playful way to the motivation of a group. It establishes a suitable climate for socialization and interpersonal interaction as well as develops social skills, leadership, mutual respect, mutual help.

Methods

The main purpose of this case study is to demonstrate how surfing can be an important tool to promote physical health and well-being, mental health and psychological well-being along with the social interaction and inclusion of persons with disabilities, regardless of their age or disability.

The present data has been collected by the authors since

May 2012, and this paper presents the early findings of an ongoing project (SURFaddict® - Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing) using only a small sample (the first two years of activity).

This approach is based on hydrotherapy principles but was applied to the aquatic environment and not the traditional pool. Compared to a pool, the coastal environment (beach) is much richer in sensory stimuli. Thus, this case study applied the theory of sensory integration combined with principles of hydrotherapy in an aquatic open water environment. [7, 8, 9]

Our approach to adapted surfing is based on the rehabilitation background used by occupational therapists [7, 8, 9] and is based on all areas of occupation:[10]

1) *Activities of Daily Living or ADL* ("...dressing; bathing/showering; functional mobility; personal device care; personal hygiene...");
2) *Education*, (formal educational participation, including the "...categories of extracurricular activities like sports..." as well as informal personal education participation such as "...participating in classes, programs, and activities that provide instruction/training in identified areas of interest...");
3) *Play and Leisure* (play and leisure exploration, which includes "...identifying interests, skills, opportunities and appropriate play and leisure activities, like exploration play and leisure, practice play, pretend play, games with rules, constructive play, and symbolic play..." as well as play and leisure participation, which includes "...participating in play and in appropriate leisure activities, maintaining a balance of play and leisure with other areas of occupation, and obtaining, using, and maintaining equipment, and supplies appropriately...");
4) *Social Participation* ("...engaging in activities that result in successful interaction at the community level..."; "...engaging in activities that result in successful interaction in specific required and/or desired familial roles..."; and "...engaging in activities at different levels of intimacy, including peer and friends...");
5) *Work* (employment interests and pursuits, which includes "...identifying and selecting work opportunities based on assets, limitations, likes, and dislikes relative to work..."; as well as "...employment seeking and acquisition...", which includes "...identifying and recruiting for job opportunities; completing, submitting, and reviewing appropriate application materials; preparing for interviews; participating in interviews and following up afterward; discussing job benefits; and finalizing negotiations...").

Based on these Areas of Occupation, we were able to establish several therapeutic goals for people with disabilities based on their roles in society. The goals utilized a pleasant activity, were based in a specific context, reinforced the positive aspects they can play in everyday life, and fought the stigma associated with disabilities.

People with disabilities also explored issues related to education and work activities including possible employment opportunities such as working in the adapted surfing industry, manufacturing devices and materials such as surfboards or wetsuits or embarking in competition as a high-performance athlete.

The Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing - SURFaddict® has used this rehabilitation and inclusion background since May of 2012. It has organized events at several beaches along the Portuguese coastline (Mainland and Portuguese Islands), providing all the accessibility conditions for surfing and a team of volunteers who guarantee safety and support for the activity. Everyone - regardless of his or her disability - was able to experience catching a wave. SURFaddict® also provided specific training to surfers and surf schools, preparing them to work and surf with people who have different types of disabilities. Additionally, adapting sports equipment makes participation in surfing more inclusive with the use of custom-made and adapted surfboards and wetsuits. These adaptations are available and specially designed by an occupational therapist receiving valuable input from experienced surfers with disabilities. One other crucial topic was adapting the beach for people with disabilities based on the physical barriers of the environment. Doing so assists with the promotion and development of projects and activities for coastline accessibility especially when considering the equipment and infrastructure supporting the beaches.

Results

Interest in surfing has been growing at a steady rate in Portugal over the last decade not only as a sport, but also as a social and an economic activity. In Portugal there are currently 186 surf schools and 78 surf clubs based on the Portuguese Surfing Federation 2014 database. [11]

Surfing can be seen as bringing added value in the prevention and treatment of many pathological conditions by contributing to social inclusion, helping to prevent sedentary lifestyles and stress, improving self-esteem and encouraging teamwork. In addition it stimulates the protection of the environment and quality of life.

However, there is still a lack of information and studies about using surfing as a therapeutic tool. Additionally, there are few surfers and surf coaches with specific knowledge about disability.

Mobility ⭐ Autism ⭐ Visual Impaired ⭐ Cognitive/Intellectual ⭐ Down Syndrome

With an average of five events per year, SURFaddict® has provided opportunities for more than three hundred persons with disabilities to be able to surf. Their disabilities have ranged from limb amputations, spinal cord injuries, Downs Syndrome, autism, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and visual impairments, among others.

Table I: Characteristics of SURFaddict© participants, 2012

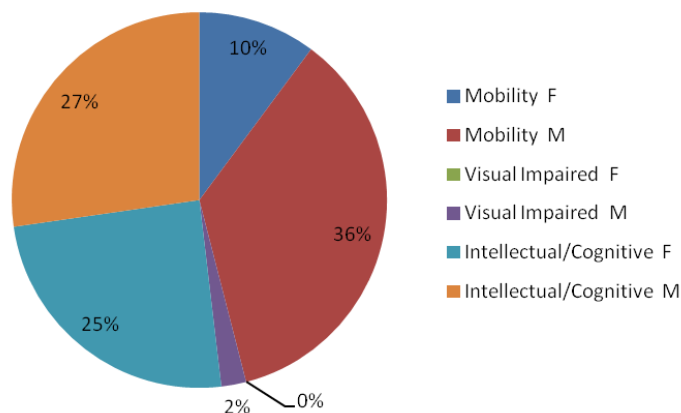| Event	Age		Type of Disability						Total
			Mobility		Visual Impaired		Intellectual/Cognitive		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Baleal	[19-34] (Mean=26)	[9-55] (Mean=29)	4	14	0	0	5	7	30
Figueira Foz	[8-46] (Mean=20)	[28-62] (Mean=44)	2	8	0	0	2	1	13
Cortegaça	[12-46] (Mean=23)	[13-62] (Mean=30)	8	21	0	3	7	6	45
Carcavelos	[9-46] (Mean=30)	[30-46] (Mean=35)	2	16	0	1	4	4	27
Supertubos	[27-46] (Mean=37)	[11-55] (Mean=31)	3	8	0	0	28	33	72
Total	[8-46]	[9-62]	86		4		97		187

In comparing the numbers and types of disability (Tables I and II), the first year had a higher number of participants with a total of 187 adapted surfers in 2012 and a total of 134 adapted surfers in 2013.

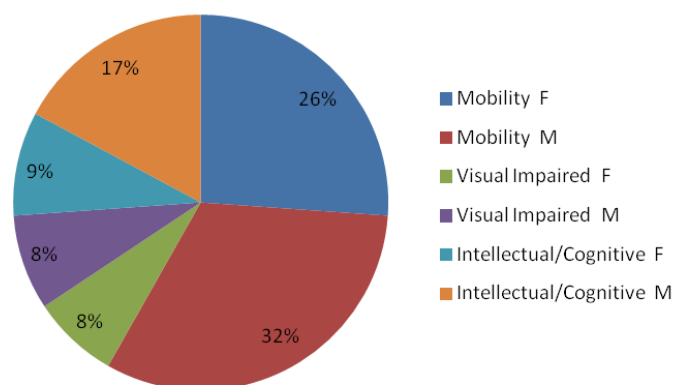*Table II: Characteristics of SURFaddict© participants, 2013*

Event	Age		Type of Disability						Total
			Mobility		Visual Impaired		Intellectual/Cognitive		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Praia Rocha	[8-34] (Mean=21)	[14-55] (Mean=35)	3	8	0	0	3	6	20
São Torpes	[22-46] (Mean=34)	[15-46] (Mean=31)	9	12	0	1	3	8	33
São Miguel	[13-39] (Mean=26)	[15-57] (Mean=36)	2	3	0	0	1	2	8
Figueria Foz	[8-46] (Mean=27)	[13-66] (Mean=40)	13	9	3	6	2	5	38
Matosinhos	[11-54] (Mean=33)	[9-58] (Mean=34)	8	11	7	4	3	2	35
Total	[8-54]	[9-66]	78		21		35		134

After examining the adapted surfers in 2012 in more detail, it can be seen that of the 187 adapted surfers, there were 86 with mobility impairment (19 female – 10%; and 67 male – 36%); 4 with visual impairment (all males – 2%) and 97 with intellectual and cognitive disabilities (46 female – 25%; and 51 male – 27%).

Disabilities 2012

- Mobility F
- Mobility M
- Visual Impaired F
- Visual Impaired M
- Intellectual/Cognitive F
- Intellectual/Cognitive M

Disabilities 2013

- Mobility F
- Mobility M
- Visual Impaired F
- Visual Impaired M
- Intellectual/Cognitive F
- Intellectual/Cognitive M

In 2013, although there was a slight decrease in the total number of adapted surfers, with 53 fewer participants than the previous year. Even with the decrease, there was a more diverse sample considering the gender and kind of disability, with 78 with mobility impairment (35 female – 26%; and 43 male – 32%); 21 visually impaired (10 female – 8%; and 11 male – 8%) and 35 with intellectual and cognitive disabilities (12 female – 9%; and 23 male – 17%).

Mobility impairment was the most frequently occurring disability among the surfers who participated over the past two years with the Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing with a total of 164 surfers (51% of total). The disability was followed by intellectual and cognitive disabilities with a total of 132 (41% of total), and finally visually impaired surfers with a total of 25 (8% of total). These numbers potentially show us the possible distrust, suspicion, or stigma more evident in visually impaired persons in participating in "extreme" aquatic outdoors sports. People with visual impairment are generally fit, unless there are other disabilities involved. Their movements, however, are generally not as free as those of people who have no visual impairment. The fear of falling or crashing against hard objects leads normally to a rigid posture and movement as well as a shuffling gait. Furthermore, acute loss of vision may be associated with an adverse psychological reaction.[13]

Discussion

Adapted surfing events are attracting a number of participants, several of whom attended consecutive events in the same year. Social networks such as Facebook® were used to advertise the events. Participants were asked to provide feedback about these events after their participation. Feelings such as fear, anxiety, and apprehension were frequently observed in the beginning due to the newness of the activity, lack of experience and training, and the absence of previous contact with surfing. During and after the practices participants expressed emotions such as pleasure, overcoming, autonomy and happiness.

Surfing has been steadily growing in Portugal over the last few decades not only as a sport, but also as a social and economic activity. Surfing can be seen as bringing added value to the prevention and treatment of many pathological conditions, which contributes to social inclusion, the avoidance of sedentary lifestyle and stress, improvements in self-esteem and encouraging teamwork as well as stimulating the protection of the environment and quality of life. However, there is still a lack of information and studies using surfing as a therapeutic tool and little research that includes surfers and surf coaches with specific knowledge about disability. The Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing was a pioneer in showing the value of surfing as a therapeutic tool for people in Portugal with different disabilities. Surfing is finally being regarded as highly important in Portugal, not only by surfers, therapists, and social workers but also by the general public and politicians.

The organization´s strategy for the next years will focus on showing how social inclusion development led by surfing will require the professionalization of surfing coaches in Portugal.

Conclusion

Sport, physical activity, and play are identified in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[12] as providing support for the increasingly well-recognized right to participate in sport and physical activity.

This article points out the question of whether surfing can be seen as an inclusive sport and also a tool for physical, mental and social rehabilitation. This can be assessed using four factors: (a) empowerment; (b) social interaction and integration; (c) physical rehabilitation, and (d) awareness-raising.[6]

Through *empowerment,* adapted surfing instructors can provide the opportunity and the necessary space for persons with disabilities to find new ways of dealing with the challenges of daily life. By growing self-esteem and self-confidence, persons with disabilities may feel encouraged to try and find an active role in society in lieu of feeling so burdened by their disability. Surfing allows *social interaction and inclusion*, especially among children and youngsters as a result of participants learning and applying social interaction rules, taking on and playing an individual role within a team, and being part of individual socialization. As in other mixed sport groups, in adapted surfers with and without disabilities face challenges together, especially because all of them have to leave their "comfort zone" (dry land) and enter an unknown environment (the ocean). Surfing also presents a great opportunity for them to grow in knowledge and mutual appreciation, which increases the empathic skills for everyone involved. Adapted surfing, as an aquatic activity that takes part in an environment full of stimuli also has numerous therapeutic benefits. It acts as an important therapeutic instrument for *physical rehabilitation* especially in the orthopaedic and neurological fields. Persons with disabilities benefit from improved balance and motor coordination and consequently handle medical devices better, making them more autonomous in their daily life.[6] Additionally, adapted surfing activities allow *awareness-raising*, since these activities serve as a forum for information and discussion for families, friends, and the broader community. People with disabilities can seek information on the causes and treatment of disabilities, how

to avoid risk and decreased symptomatology. These sport experiences can raise awareness about the situation of persons with disabilities, the rights of persons with disabilities and various topics such as health risk factors and primary health care.[6]

Adapted surfing can and should be seen as bringing added value to the prevention and treatment of many pathological conditions because it contributes to social inclusion, improves self-esteem, facilitates teamwork, discourages sedentary lifestyle and exclusion (self and social), as well as stimulates protection of the environment and enhancing the quality of life.

Surfing can play a significant role in the lives of people with disabilities by promoting physical well being, combating discrimination, building confidence, and playing an important role in the rehabilitation process. Four major factors were identified through surfing: Aquatic Environment; Environment – Individual Interaction; Individual - Coach/Therapist Interaction; and also Group Interaction.

The researchers' conclusion in regards to the Portuguese Association of Adapted Surfing is that given the low frequency of activities that have been analyzed, there is a need to increase the number of activities that are analyzed per year in order to obtain a more extensive sample that can more explicitly determine the true therapeutic results from surfing. In this way, the main therapeutic benefits for each group of persons with disabilities can be obtained with the aim of improving future interventions by finding the therapeutic indication patterns for each group. We hope in the near future that adapted surfing will gain more attention from governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to obtain more funding to support these programs. More funding would enable researchers to conduct this kind of work more often, and produce more extensive data to support the case for the usefulness of adapted surfing.

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Original Research

A qualitative examination of Latin American wheelchair sport practitioners' marketing practices

Michael Cottingham[1], **Doug Blais[2]**, **Brian Gearity[3]**, **Kim Bogle[2]**, **Ryan Zapalac[4]**

[1] University of Houston, Department of Health and Human Performance, USA
[2] Southern New Hampshire University, School of Business, USA
[3] University of Denver, School of Psychology, USA
[4] Sam Houston State University, Department of Health and Kinesiology, USA

Corresponding author email: mcotting@central.uh.edu

Abstract

Latin American disability sport programs are an important economic and social component of sport with a strong presence in the Paralympic Games, impressive results at international competitions and growth in domestic programming. Yet current marketing research offers no data that is specific to Latin American disability sport promotion. The purpose of this study was to explore the current strategies of marketing disability sport in Latin American countries and factors that influence these strategies. Nine participants representing disability sport organizations in six countries were interviewed with results transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Among other findings, results indicated that governmental support varied across Latin American nations as did professional training and the formality of marketing plans, which impacted short and long term organizational goals. General themes such as problematic perceptions of athletes with disabilities, surrounding cultural stereotypes, and level of media involvement also impacted strategic planning and resource acquisition.

Background on Disability Sport Marketing (Anglo Focus)

Research on wheelchair sport marketing has recently gained substantial attention. Primary lines of research in this context include United States collegiate wheelchair basketball players' perspectives of how they are marketed,[1,2] disability sport consumer behaviour studies,[3,4,5] scholars' perspectives on the need to increase disability sport funding by way of social justice,[6,7] the use of hyper-masculine images and violence in United States quad rugby,[8,9] and Western disability sport executives' perspectives on the promotion of their sport.[10] While these studies piece together the marketing perspectives of athletes, event promoters, and spectators, they all are homogenous in that they are exclusively focused on United States and European interests.

Disability and wheelchair sport, however, is an international industry; 164 countries competed in the 2012 Paralympic Games. Over 2.7 million tickets were sold to events, and television coverage was accessible in over 100 countries. In addition, electronic coverage surged as over 5.1 million downloads were conducted on Paralympic.org while Facebook and Twitter memberships swelled.[11]

The IPC has supported research on topics as varied as drag for swimmers to nutritional habits of Paralympic athletes.[12] These efforts to support and disseminate research have been used to improve opportunities for and performance of athletes with disabilities. However, little data exists on wheelchair sport in Latin America and virtually no research focuses on the promotional efforts of Latin American wheelchair sport. Specifically, understanding successful promotional strategies of wheelchair sport in Latin America and the population's perceptions of disability may benefit the promotion and ultimately enhance the success of the Paralympic Games. The purpose of this study was to explore Latin American sport practitioners' marketing practices for wheelchair sport as well as factors which influence those methods. To better understand this contextually, a review of literature on sport marketing in Latin America and wheelchair sport marketing is provided.

Sport Marketing in Latin America

While existing studies such as Ferreira and Bravo[13] have focused on country-specific sports consumption, to date there is little research on sport marketing in Latin America, which is undoubtedly a booming market with new opportunities for commerce, promotion, and sponsorship. Representing a $3.7 billion dollar sponsorship market,[14] the region's growth and influence has reached substantial levels prompting the creation of a Spanish and Latino special edition by the International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship.[15] Recognizing the advantageous industry, Canon U.S.A sponsored Copa America Argentina 2011 as "a unique opportunity to reach the fast-growing Latin American markets."[16] Similarly, the Professional Golf Association recently launched a Latin American tour while major sport marketing firms such as IMG, Octagon, and Wasserman Media Group currently converge towards Brazil with hopes of capitalizing on the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Michael Payne, a former IOC executive explained, "It's a market unlike the U.K. or U.S., where there's not a great tradition or heritage of sports marketing expertise, so a lot of the big players are moving in."[17] Bravo, Oreja, Vélez, and Lopez de D'Amico[18] note that these markets can be diverse with larger markets focusing on professional sports and smaller markets focusing on tourism and related entities. Sport organizational structures often resemble European designs more than U.S. formats having both Ministers of Sport as well as a publically managed club format.[19] Additional governmental regulations can impact private investment (e.g. sponsorship). The relationship between sport and government is all the more challenging due to the relative newness of sport marketing in Latin America.

Yet, sports marketing agencies seeking to penetrate this specialized market have found that it is highly regionalized and dependent on local and relational needs;[20] it is most effectively accessed by joint ventures, buying existing agencies, or setting up offices staffed by locals.[17] Regarding sponsorships in the sports market, recent literature suggests that they serve to improve corporate image, promote social action,[16,20,21] and increase awareness and consumption.[13,22]

While present studies clearly demonstrate current general market trends in Latin America, little research has specifically examined the marketing strategies utilized in Latin American sport companies. Furthermore, wheelchair sport marketing is yet to be explored, justifying the need for further research in order to understand important aspects of sponsorship, wheelchair sport and specific strategies of sports marketing organizations in Latin America. Disability in Latin America is represented by multiple languages and diverse cultures, geography and political climates. Still, demographic data shows that Latin America provides a similar reality for many individuals with disabilities. Among other findings, we see that individuals with disabilities have higher rates of illiteracy (up to four times the national average) and lower levels of employment with levels ranging from 10-25 %.[23]

Of the limited empirical research on disability in Latin America, most has focused on quality of life such as the emergence of human rights, education, and rights to employment movement in Latin America.[24,25,26,27] Other studies focus on the availability of services (e.g., library services, support systems) to people with disabilities[28] and the Special Olympics.[29]

There is a gap in the literature in regard to disability sport in Latin America. Latin American countries accounted for 20 of the 164 nations in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. Latin American countries also sponsor 14 national basketball teams, 15 international tennis programs and six wheelchair rugby programs. Each of these national teams draws from numerous regional and club teams within their own respective country. If Latin America is to continue to grow and develop competitive wheelchair sport teams, then efforts must be made to identify best practices in the promotion of wheelchair sport in this context.

Methods

Research Design & Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore Latin American sport practitioners' marketing practices for wheelchair sport and the factors which influence those practices. Four research questions were created to fulfill this purpose:

Research Question #1: What are the current marketing practices of the organization?

Research Question #2: What are the funding sources of the represented organization?

Research Question #3: What media outlets are most supportive of the represented organization?

Research Question #4: How is disability perceived in the representative community?

As the first study on the marketing practices of Latin American wheelchair sport, an exploratory qualitative research design was used. This design is particularly well-suited when little is known about a topic in order to help the researcher understand the phenomenon without imparting undue bias, and also as an essential step before using other research designs and methods such as (quasi) experimental designs or surveys.[30,31] As an exploratory study, research questions were intentionally designed to collect a breadth (rather than depth) of responses across multiple but related topics germane to sport marketing. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study before data were collected.

Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain information-rich sources of data.[32] The first author contacted the governing bodies of Latin American wheelchair basketball, rugby and tennis to assist with identifying prospects. Subsequently, the 17 identified prospects across the three sports and a range of competitive levels were contacted to voluntarily participate. Nine participants representing six Latin American countries responded and participated in the study, and each provided consent to identify their names and affiliations. At the time of data collection, each participant was an executive within a Latin American wheelchair sport organization. Table 1 shows the name, country, respective sport, and title of each participant. All participants agreed to have their names used in the study, and this disclosure was approved by the IRB.

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant, allowing the researchers to collect pertinent data and the participants to provide possibly new and interesting responses. Interview questions that were asked were directly related to the research questions.[33] Example interview questions included, "What are your current policies on marketing disability sport? How is disability perceived in your culture, and how does that influence marketing your sport?" Due to language differences, special considerations were given to accommodate the participants. Two of the participants affirmed they could conduct the interview comfortably in English, while seven preferred Spanish. The first author conducted the two interviews in English with those participants who felt comfortable with the language.

Table 1. Biographical Description of Study Participants

Name	Country	Wheelchair Sport	Title	Organization
Alonso, Alejandra E.	Argentina	Basketball	Sports Director	Argentina Center of Free and Supportive Integration
Asprilla, Edward	Columbia	Basketball	Trainer	Columbia Wheelchair Basketball
Contreras, Rodrigo A.	Chile	Tennis	Chair	Chile Municipal Tennis
De Acajabón, Marta J.	Guatemala	Basketball	President; General Secretary	Guatemalan Association of Disabled Support; Guatemalan Paralympic Committee
Foa, Juan	Argentina	Rugby	President, Latin America	International Wheelchair Rugby Association
Irigoya, Miguel A.	El Salvador	Tennis	Executive Director; Secretary	Central American & Caribbean Tennis Confederation; El Salvadoran Tennis Federation
Juarez Cisneros, José J.	Mexico	Rugby	Event Operations	Independent Life
López Ortiz, Luis J.	Colombia	Basketball	Technical Coordinator	Physical Disability League of North Santander
Salazar, Juan P.	Columbia	Rugby	President	Wheelchair Sport Federation and Commission, London Paralympics

The remaining interviews were conducted by two bilingual interviewers familiar with sport marketing research and qualitative interviews. The first author further trained the bilingual interviewers by showing them transcripts of the English interviews. Then the first author reviewed the first interviews conducted by the bilingual interviewers. This step acted as a peer debriefing session, which helped the interviewers understand how to make possible changes to subsequent interviews, thereby also enhancing trustworthiness.

All interviews were conducted over the phone or via Skype, audio recorded, and lasted between 24 to 53 minutes. The interviews in Spanish were transcribed by the respective bilingual interviewer, one of whom also transcribed the English interviews.

Data Analysis

Data were inductively analyzed using the constant comparative method, which was initially developed for grounded theory but has expanded to use in qualitative studies in general.[34,35] This approach is appropriate when no prior theoretical framework is used as the lens to analyze the data or when little is known about the topic, so the researchers can develop an insider (Latin American executives') understanding of the phenomenon.[34] The constant comparative method consists of coding individual transcripts starting with a line-by-line analysis. This study utilized the smallest unit of analysis, called meaning units, as an introductory step to interpret the data. Similar meaning units were further analyzed and grouped within each transcript to develop sub-themes. Finally, sub-themes were grouped across all transcripts to develop themes, and, therefore, answer the research questions.

In order to enhance the rigor of this study, three separate researchers individually analyzed each of the nine transcripts. Then, the researchers discussed their analysis in a critical and constructive manner, helping to refine the sub-themes. After a lengthy (approximately 30 hour) analysis process, the researchers agreed upon the final interpretation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the accuracy and dependability of qualitative research.[32] Trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by the use of multiple researchers during the analysis process.[36] This step challenges the researchers to clarify and define their interpretations of the themes. Member checking, a procedure in which the participants are given a summary of the findings to modify, dispute or

corroborate, was used in order to ensure the researchers' interpretation was accurate.[30] Finally, an external peer debriefer, a trained and experienced qualitative researcher, was used to review the results and by extension, the data analysis. Upon this peer debriefer's feedback, the results were modestly adjusted (i.e., clarification of the themes' meaning, word choices to reflect participants' understanding). Finally, the first author maintained an audit trail of the data analysis and research process in order to provide transparency and accuracy and to enable challenges to the methods at a later date or upon request.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the current marketing practices of the organization?

Value of marketing. The participants expressed a wide variety of perspectives on the value of marketing wheelchair sport. Some organizations placed a high value on marketing while others focused on the preparation of athletes. The majority of participants understood the importance of marketing; however, implementation was fragmented.

Edward Asprilla expressed a deep focus on his athletes: "Our priority is the preparation of our athletes. That's our priority that they participate in different events." In contrast, Juan Juarez expressed a greater emphasis on marketing and explained, "We have some contacts, for example with Gatorade. So we are making an annual plan. This plan is focused on promotion."

Luis Lopez Ortiz expressed that although the importance of marketing was identified, the approach to marketing was piecemeal rather than structured:

We ask for help, in return for what? Well in exchange for advertising, the uniforms. I dictate training for basketball, I'm the coordinator, so I also work with the different sponsoring companies. This is a way to do the publicity, get the posters, reach the population through radio and print sources and television...We are working this way because we really don't have a concrete structure of how to do it. That's what we're doing for now.

Alejandra Ester Alonso also stated the following:

We don't have a plan of the term "marketing," but we've done evaluations and we are growing. We continue to make progress and the presentation of all our values, of national events, and with this we go out to different companies to...

... see if we can gain support for our basketball team in a competitive and professional way.

Exposure and awareness. All participants recognized the importance of developing promotional strategies in order to attract attention from spectators and sponsors and also to acquire funding. These strategies varied and included raising awareness by actively working to attract media coverage and retaining sponsors. Juan Pablo Salazar described raising awareness, "I showed them the sport... by a one or two minute video of wheelchairs crashing into each other, you get the shock, you get their interest," Miguel Antonio Irigoya explained attracting media coverage:

So this is what the brands like. They like to appear in the media, they like to be related with a wheelchair event, that is well, in public interest. This is basically the way we win the hearts of the sponsors.

Rodrigo Acevedo Contreras stressed the importance of retaining sponsors: "For example if I have a sponsor for a certain brand. We need to keep in contact with them."

Barriers. Six subjects pointed out a number of barriers. Organizational limitations were apparent when Miguel Antonio Irigoya claimed,

The return of the investment is very difficult to measure because we are small countries and we don't have a marketing department that does studies, and many times the investigation turns out to be much more expensive than the sponsorship.

Cultural limitations related to resources were described when Marta Juliana de Acajabón stated, "Logically we can't charge a single cent because people won't pay, right? - to see people in a wheelchair playing sports. We try to raise awareness so that people can know the sport." Juan Salizar summed up the barriers related to limited perceptions concisely and explained, "We can't pretend to be at the same level as able-bodied sports because we don't have the history, we don't have the political, cultural, and economic backing that able-bodied sports do."

Partnerships with able-bodied organizations. Participants discussed partnerships with able-bodied organizations and their advantages. Miguel Antonio Irigoya expressed that wheelchair rugby and tennis programs seemed to benefit the most from successful partnerships:

Our greatest allies to develop wheelchair tennis, our greatest fans, let's say, are traditional tennis players, the

regular players. They definitely are the ones that like the event, they know what it's like to play tennis, they know the effort it takes and they recognize it.

Likewise, Juan Foa explains that support from the national and local rugby unions helps to establish teams in every province because the unions facilitate connections with local human sources. Edward Asprilla discussed how his organization aspires to promote basketball through developing partnerships as well and said, "For example with conventional basketball, the conversations with them have just begun in regards to having events together."

Research Question 2: What are the funding sources of the represented organization?

A presentation of organizational funding sources is provided below. We categorized these into governmental funding and sponsorship, as none of the participants spoke positively of ticket fees or other forms of revenue.

Governmental funding. Five participants confirmed receipt of government funding, including when Juan Foa stated,

Since it is a developing country, first you have to get support from the public entities because the private entities are much harder. So we go [get] the support from the state, the national government, then from the city of Buenos Aires because it is the capital of Argentina.

Three participants stated they did not receive government support.

Sponsorship. Five participants noted cash funding and/or in-kind donations, and Rodrigo Acevedo Contreras explained,

[An event] was a success and we were able to get sponsors that will continue to support us. Some with money, others not with money...Like Radisson, we had a good deal in our last event. They supported us in our activities in hosting people from other regions. Also, transportation. Help transporting people or players who don't have the means to pay for transportation. We have different types of sponsors. For example, restaurants, prizes... Now, every club has their own sponsors and each manages that.

Four participants specifically spoke of difficulties and frustrations with attracting sponsors: "We do not have much collaboration with the private sector- businesses or corporations. No, it's almost null, their participation," said Edgard Asprilla.

In addition, single participants also noted strategic partnerships, donations, and self- funding. These other funding components are not discussed in depth here nor in the discussion due to the limited frequency but are worthy of notation.

Research Question 3: What media outlets are most supportive of the represented organization?

The participants were asked to discuss their organization's ability to employ media. A detailed presentation is provided below. In short, use of the internet was universally hailed as a benefit to all organizations. Print and radio coverage was generally well-received while television was difficult to attain. Finally, direct outreach efforts were also mentioned as beneficial by some participants.

Internet. All nine participants recognized the usability and accessibility of the Internet, although the sophistication of Internet usage varied substantially between organizations. Juan Foa best summed up internet promotion:

I think it's key because with Internet you can get to a lot of people with no pause at all so it depends on us to create a lot of content video, photos, to show the people who you are, making groups and everything. So if the people like what we are doing...people watch.

Television. Only three participants described television coverage as a positive experience while five viewed it was negative. With respect to the positive experiences, Rodrigo Acevedo Contreras stated,

And television is great! It's major, everyone watches TV! Imagine that we have an event where we fuse with another event. Let's say for example we have a tournament Chile vs. Spain and we have Nadal. What does it cost Nadal to give up a few minutes of his time to support and help? Or a message from him saying he supports us. It can be Gonzalez, Nadal, Ferrer...anyone, just someone important... It makes a difference to the businesses that support us.

The negative experiences focused on the inability to procure coverage and Marta Juliana de Acajabón said, "Yeah, we don't depend much on television, we can't." Additionally, the concept of acquiring television coverage simply was not viewed as valuable compared to other outlets, and Miguel Antonio Irigoya explained,

TV coverage it is important but is seen by less people. The people have to watch it at a certain time. On the other hand,

print media can be read at any moment and can even be saved for later.

Print media. Seven participants discussed the opportunity for coverage through relationships with print media, and Miguel Antonio Irigoya described:

So we try to, we have very good relationships with the journalists, we try to be with them in the best way possible, we try to be in good partnership with them, help them, so that they help us in the promotion of events.

However, Edward Asprilla asserted an infrequent use of print media and claimed, "The press ...we use it seldomly."

Radio. Four participants mentioned support through radio in varying degrees. Juan Foa noted, "Yeah, we kind of look for more contact with the radio than any other."

Direct outreach. Three participants described their approaches to direct outreach, which included staging events, providing brochures and making personal calls to educate both the media and potential spectators.

A holistic approach to media coverage. While each participant acknowledged at least some strategies related to promotion and some spoke of utilizing multiple components of media, only one participant consistently expressed a comprehensive policy on media coverage. Rodrigo Acevedo Contreras explained,

What always works is the radio, internet, written press and television coverage together... but mostly social media helps a lot. And I think a Facebook page and to find us. Everything works together... I can make a phone call [to sponsors] but they have to know I am calling to offer something and not to ask for something and that it will benefit them and their employees [due to media coverage]. An employee can say, yeah my company supports wheelchair tennis, that's good.

Appropriate media coverage. Six participants articulated the importance of how disability is portrayed by media, and specifically that it is covered respectfully and appropriately. An emphasis was placed on athleticism and positive images of disability rather than paternalistic presentations. Salizar explained,

What I am more concerned about here is the education of journalists who cover Paralympic sports. Sometimes they do more harm than if they did not cover the sport. When they...

...write an article in a newspaper... saying that perspective about disabilities that are invalid or words that will translate like crippled ... they harm the movement more. I think there is a big challenge ... educating to the media and the journalist to use proper language and use proper ways to understand disabilities sports as elite sports and not having it as a story of some hero, in a condescending way.

Research Question 4: How is disability perceived in the representative community?

Inspirational supercrips. All nine of the participants conversed about the supercrip image or the inspirational quality of the athletes. Interestingly, the participants referred to athletes being inspirational almost exclusively as a positive aspect for sport promotion. Juan Juarez explained that being promoted as an inspirational image is an opportunity for disabled athletes or other accomplished disabled persons to stand out or be viewed differently.

This presentation of inspiration was also interwoven with independence. Edward Asprilla explained that the public has more admiration for disabled athletes because they are active, and therefore, viewed as independent.

In addition, the presentation of the supercrip narrative was seen almost exclusively to combat what was perceived as a more dangerous narrative of the incapable person with a disability. In short, while a stereotype, it was seen as combating a more limiting one.

Negative perceptions. Three negative perspectives were identified by at least some of the participants, including the socially undesirable stigma of people with disabilities, their perceived helplessness, and the general and widespread unawareness of society.

Socially undesirable stigma. Six of the participants expressed that people with disabilities were perceived as socially undesirable. Athletes were almost always removed from this negative assumption, separating the non-athletes from the athletes. Alejandra Ester Alonso expressed this stigma:

Honestly the people look at us as distinguishing or different. There are guys that still are tucked away in their houses, hidden, and when they leave their familial nest, the presence or existence of the person is not even acknowledged. That is to say, the treatment of disabled people in our country has much to work on.

Helplessness. Four participants believed that society saw athletes with disabilities as helpless. "They think that when you have a disability there isn't much more you can do with your life," said Edward Asprilla.

Unawareness of society. Three participants noted that society was unaware of athletes with disabilities. Juan Foa acknowledged this issue: "To be honest, here, if you talk with regular people that do not have contact with disabilities it is like they don't even know that disability sport exists."

Furthermore, three participants revealed that perceptions of helplessness and being unaware and socially undesirable either individually or in concert, led to uncomfortable experiences for potential spectators. According to Miguel Antonio Irigoya , some spectators think that these activities are strange and that the participants are suffering. Irigoya further explained that they are changing this mentality.

Evolving/integrated perspectives. With this suggestion of a changing mentality, it is interesting to observe that perspectives on disability are improving, as seven of the study's participants stated explicitly.. What differed between participants' perspectives was how far they believed society had come. Miguel Antonio Irigoya described his culture as ignorant and explained that the large quantity of disabled beggars in his country created an image associating people who use wheelchairs with beggars. Irigoya illustrates the results of this association:

They don't respect the disabled sports for people in wheelchairs in the malls and parking spaces and things like that, because maybe it doesn't occur to them at that moment that people in wheelchairs could come, or it doesn't occur to them that they can drive. (Miguel Antonio Irigoya)

In contrast, Ortiz described a more evolved image:

Look, at first it was something tremendous, right? You see a disabled person and think "cripple, lame." They are looked on with a lot of pity. In today's world that's not the case. We have been finding our place with the disability and already the people are entering a different culture, you know? It's not anymore like yeah, they're good for begging and we give them alms. There are people with disabilities who have recovered. And they have placed themselves on a basketball team, many people working in the municipality, guys that are graduating, many that are finishing the majority of high school, so we have been rising.

The actual perceptions of disability are best encompassed in

the following insights offered by Juan Salazar, who described three ways that people in Columbia view disabilities. The first view is that God is punishing a baby because of the parents' shortcomings. Salazar explained,

People will say their parents were bad people and they would learn something from this, like a karma way to perceive disability. You also see this in the city, when a rich guy gets a stroke, his friends are going to judge him.

The second view is that through sufficient medical intervention, disabled people could be normal. The third view is spearheaded by activists and intellectuals and is based on emerging human rights, since Columbia recently ratified conventional rights for people with disabilities. Salazar compared racism to the way that disabilities are perceived and he explained that racism and disabilities are examples of perceived boundaries rather than tangible limitations. The human rights movement believes that more individual knowledge and personal growth are required to understand disabilities. Salazar further explained that sports help market the human rights message and change perspectives by allowing the public to see these disabled athletes as active and independent individuals, rather than as beggars.

Discussion

Marketing Strategies and Practices

Development of cohesive strategies based on established principles. It is clear throughout the data presented that many of the marketers for wheelchair sport in Latin America have limited formalized sport marketing training. These findings mirror statements made by Bravo et al.,[18] who noted that marketing strategy in Latin America lacks adequate sophistication and needs improvement in various sport marketing contexts. Furthermore, the wheelchair sport practitioners who were interviewed for this study had a history of sport participation or advocacy work, rather than a marketing history. Therefore, their training may be behind their non- wheelchair sport peers who work in Latin American sport promotion.

Given that there is also a wealth of marketing research on the Hispanic/Latino sport consumers in North America, concepts gleaned from these studies could also be helpful in designing targeted strategies for the Latin American disability sport consumers. Harrolle et al.,[21] also noted that Hispanic/Latino consumers' BIRGing, or Basking-In-Reflected-Glory behaviors were excellent predictors of attendance at future games or events. Thus, a wheelchair

sport marketer in a Latin American market may use this information to better target consumers riding an emotional high. BIRGing may be applicable in this context for two reasons: first of all, attachment points to disability sport can be quite high;[4] secondly, inspiration by way of the supercrip image can increase emotional reaction.[37] This is where the training becomes critical to the development of effective strategies by making the practitioner aware of these and other empirical results. Thus, Latin American wheelchair sport marketers should be provided and should seek out additional training opportunities that will help them develop comprehensive marketing strategies that realize gains for their respective organization.

Variability in marketing investment and sophistication. Levels of sophistication and investment in marketing varied across programs. This is not distinctive in this context, as Doherty, Saker and Smith[38] observed differences in public leisure marketing sophistication, and Lynn, Lipp, Akgun and Cortez[39] observed organizational differences in online marketing sophistication. The findings of this study are unique in that while education, program size, staff size, leadership differences and program history may influence the investment and sophisticationof a marketing plan, our results suggest that the relationship to able-bodied organizations may be the most significant determining factor in marketing strategy sophistication.

Relationship to able-bodied organizations. Of the sports represented in this study, wheelchair tennis was the first to develop partnerships and to integrate into an able-bodied sport's governing body at an international level.40 Specifically, the International Wheelchair Tennis Federation became part of the International Tennis Federation (ITF). While some autonomy might have been lost, the ITF provided stability to wheelchair tennis, which in turn impacted specific member nations who are required to work through their national able-bodied tennis organization in order to have athletes compete in ITF-sanctioned events. Because of this, national governing bodies for wheelchair tennis are expected to support and promote wheelchair tennis.

Similarly, wheelchair rugby governing bodies have recently worked to develop partnerships with their able-bodied counterparts as exemplified by the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation's efforts to seek collaboration with the International Rugby Board.[41] Able- bodied governing entities such as the ITF and IRB have existing resources and strategies in sport marketing; in contrast, wheelchair sport organizations oftentimes do not have the human resources,

leadership, or professional training to prioritize marketing. Although wheelchair basketball has an estimated 100,000 players throughout the world[41] as well as the potential for growth, the current lack of substantial direct ties to able-bodied organizations provides unique challenges. As previously stated, these governing bodies may retain more autonomy without the affiliation to larger able-bodied organizations but in exchange for conceivably less leverage in promoting wheelchair sport.

Funding Sources

To date, there is little evidence on how wheelchair sport is funded at the national or local level. Almost no information exists on sponsorship, except a few newspaper articles such as "Sponsorship lift"[42] and press releases such as "NEC extends sponsorship,"[43] which discuss individual sponsorship contracts but provide no data related to size of the sponsorship contacts. For this reason, this study provides a baseline understanding of how some national level wheelchair sport programs are funded. The results indicate that such funding is primarily a combination of governmental funding, sponsorship acquisition, direct outreach, and in-kind donations.

Media Coverage

The use of the Internet is the primary source of media coverage by the represented organizations. This use of an online platform is consistent with Cottingham et al.,[3] who explained that online viewership of wheelchair basketball and rugby is higher than in-person viewership. We confirmed that all organizations represented had a website, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account; however, the Facebook and Twitter following varied greatly. Those organizations that are more active in social networking are able to engage in brandfesting, a mechanism by which fans of a sport or team can share experiences and note their support. This action has been shown to increase attachment and investment in a team.[44]

There is limited research on the coverage of athletes with disabilities in mainstream media. Past studies typically focused on the way athletes were presented[45,46] rather than the frequency and location of coverage. Only two studies directly addressed frequency or types of media coverage. This study represents the second time that practitioners' perspectives on access to media coverage have been examined.[47]

Perspectives' of Disability

Challenges and barriers. A number of practitioners discussed the negative social perceptions of the disabled such as being helpless and undesirable as well as the general societal ignorance that helped to form those perceptions. However, the majority of the participants expressed that such perspectives were improving, which is supported by research in non-sport contexts explaining that exposure to disability is indeed assisting in changing attitudes.[26] There seemed to be an inherent understanding from participants in this study that exposure was beneficial to changing perspectives and therefore gaining support, monetary and otherwise, from the community.

Supercrip image. This study is only the second of which to provide evidence of the supercrip image outside the United States, the first being Kama.[37] In much Western literature, the inspirational supercrip image is often perceived as negative by theorists,[48,46] as well as sport stakeholders.[1,37] In contrast, all participants in our study referred to the supercrip image as a positive concept for promotion and disability rights. Cottingham et al.,[48] found that the supercrip image may be an effective means to promote disability sport and attract spectators. With these practitioners, there is a belief that the use of the inspirational sueprcrip may not be perceived as antithetical to disability rights. However, it should be noted that research in American disability sport spectatorship has noted that the supercrip image can attract spectators to attend but does not convert them into fans.[47] In short, spectators of wheelchair sport might not be able to truly invest in the outcome and results if they are focused on the athletes overcoming.

Implications and Recommendations

Because marketing strategy sophistication varied significantly between organizations and sports, we recommend a mentorship program. A review of the International Wheelchair Rugby Federation website noted that countries with more advanced disability sport programs mentored countries with less developed programs. These mentorship efforts include training suggestions, guidance on athlete recruitment and coaching support. We suggest extending this mentorship program to address resource acquisition. In addition, our findings provide evidence that there are several ways for Latin American disability sport programs to acquire resources and recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach is not needed to successfully acquire resources.

All participants focused on online mechanisms as effective approaches to promote their programs. Clearly, online promotion is cost effective and allows individuals who support a team or sport to consume at their leisure. Future research should examine who these spectators are and more importantly, if these online efforts attract new spectators or instead simply service existing consumers.

The findings related to the supercrip narrative and the participants' perception of its impact on society. The participants noted their perception of the benefits of this image. However, researchers in America have also noted that the promotion of the supercrip narrative can be negative or at least mixed. Efforts should be made to examine this phenomenon in more depth.

Limitations and Future Research

As an exploratory qualitative study, this investigation was delimited to nine participants across multiple organizations and countries. Although this study serves as an important first step before more sophisticated research designs can be effectively used, this qualitative study is limited in its depth of findings and generalizability. Future research should continue to understand wheelchair sport marketing, for example, within one competitive level, sport, or country, as well as unique cultural factors. Rather than working from a blank slate approach,[31] the results from this study may be of use to researchers seeking to better understand marketing wheelchair sport in Latin America and to develop a theoretical explanation of marketing practices. The finding related to the participants' positive perception of the supercrip image warrants future research to understand why this was the case and also in related research on the efficacy of the supercrip image as an effective marketing tool for wheelchair sport.

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Original Research

The role of Special Olympics in promoting social inclusion: An examination of stakeholder perceptions

Chiaki Inoue[1], Tanya Forneris[1]

[1] University of Ottawa, School of Human Kinetics, Canada

Corresponding author email: tanya.forneris@uottawa.ca

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in research examining social inclusion for individuals with an intellectual disability (ID). Sport is one context that has been recognized as promising for the promotion of social inclusion. The principal provider of sport programming for individuals with ID is Special Olympics (SO). SO is a global organization with approximately 4.2 million athletes in over 180 countries. SO provides a variety of programs that range from local community-level programming to world-level competition. However, little research has been conducted to examine perceptions of how sport programs such as SO can facilitate social inclusion for individuals with ID. The purpose of this study was to use a mixed-methods design to: (1) understand how various stakeholders (chapter representatives, coaches/volunteers, parents) define social inclusion, and (2) examine whether these stakeholders perceive SO as contributing to social inclusion. The qualitative analysis revealed that stakeholders have various definitions of social inclusion but perceive SO as facilitating social inclusion within and beyond the context of sport. The quantitative data also indicated that stakeholders perceive SO as fostering social inclusion for individuals with ID.

Background

It is estimated that individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) account for 200 million around the world. [1, 2] ID is generally diagnosed before the age of 18 and occurs when there is an impairment of general mental abilities in three different domains including the conceptual domain (e.g., language, reading, math, memory), the social domain (e.g., empathy, interpersonal communication), and the practical domain (e.g. personal care, school and work tasks).[3,4] In addition, an additional criterion is someone possessing an IQ score of 70 or below. It should be noted that IQ score was removed from the definition used by the American Psychiatric Association to ensure that it was not overemphasized, but IQ score remains a part of the description of intellectual disability.[4]

An area of study that has grown in recent years related to the lived experiences of individuals living with an ID is that of social inclusion. Presently, various conceptualizations of social inclusion appear in the literature. For example, some researchers[5,6] argue that social inclusion surfaced with the emergence of social exclusion and is thus considered the antithesis of social exclusion,[7] while other researchers[8,9] argue that it arose as a value-based concept. Those who view social inclusion as a value-based concept assert that it involves more than eliminating physical boundaries or barriers; rather, it is about facilitating and empowering individuals to participate in society by minimizing both physical and social distances that exist between people. As such, these researchers view social inclusion as a proactive approach to human development and social well-being.[8,9]

A number of efforts have been made to promote social inclusion for individuals living with a disability throughout various institutions of society, particularly in education and the workplace. However, research has shown that the success of such initiatives in these institutions has been mixed.[10-14]

Keywords: sport; social inclusion; disability; Special Olympics

More recently, researchers have recognized that the context of sport and recreation may be a more promising context for the promotion of social inclusion for individuals with ID.[15, 16] Bailey[17] conducted a review of existing social inclusion literature and identified four dimensions of social inclusion in sport, physical education and physical activity: 1) spatial (minimizing various distances); 2) relational (increasing a sense of belonging and acceptance); 3) functional (opportunities to develop knowledge and improve skills); and 4) power (change in locus of control).

The principal provider of sport programming for individuals with an ID, or individuals with an ID and physical impairment, is Special Olympics (SO; 3). SO is a global organization with approximately 4.2 million athletes in over 180 countries.[4] Moreover, SO provides a variety of programs that range from local community-level programming to world-level competition. However, there has been limited research on the impact of participation in SO. Moreover, the research that exists focuses on the perceived impact of participation as opposed to research related to social inclusion. For example, one study found that participation led to the increased parental understanding of their child's abilities, participants' perceived increases in confidence, physical skills, physical activity levels as well as having a positive impact on social relationships outside of the family.[18] Research that has examined aspects of social inclusion has found that attitudinal barriers against social inclusion exist worldwide.[19, 20] However, research has also shown that such attitudes can change through the public's increased interaction with individuals who have intellectual disabilities. Widaman and Siperstein[21] found that as people became involved with SO, support for inclusion of students with ID in regular classrooms increased from 2% to 55%. Similar findings also emerged in a study examining the impact of Unified Sports, a special initiative of SO.[22] Unified Sports provides opportunities for individuals with and without ID of similar age and ability to come together to train and compete as equals. The results of the study that examined the impact of this initiative show that Unified Sports is perceived as facilitating social inclusion. However, the researchers noted that further work is needed to expand social inclusion beyond the Unified Sports programme and into the wider community.[15] It is also important to recognize that some critiques of SO are that the structure of the organization itself leads to segregation, and thus exclusion, from mainstream sport and perpetuates negative stereotypes in individuals with an ID.[23, 24] Therefore, there is a need for more research to understand whether and how SO may be a change agent for individuals with ID.

Bailey[17] also asserted that there is a need for more empirical research on social inclusion, particularly within the context of sport, in order to justify that social inclusion is more than a simple theoretical aspiration. To facilitate such research, Bailey offered the following definition of social inclusion, specifically for sport, which includes the four dimensions outlined by Bailey above.

[B]ringing individuals from a variety of social and economic backgrounds together in a shared interest in activities that are inherently valuable (spatial); offering a sense of belonging, to a team, a club, a programme (relational); providing opportunities for the development of valued capabilities and competencies (functional); and increasing 'community capital', by extending social networks, increased community cohesion and civic pride (power).[17]

This was the definition of social inclusion employed for this study, despite the contentions around defining social inclusion and how it emerged. The rationale for using this definition is that it incorporates all aspects of social inclusion that are currently recognized, in addition to being sport-specific.

In sum, there is a need for further research within the context of sport to understand whether and how a context such as SO could foster social inclusion for individuals with an ID. The focus of this research is Special Olympics Canada (SOC). To date no research has examined the role that SOC may play in social inclusion despite one of the goals of SOC being "a change agent for social inclusion - advocating for and providing all athletes with opportunities for integration through sport."[25] Therefore, the purpose of this study was to: (1) understand how various SOC stakeholders (chapter representatives, coaches/volunteers, parents and athletes) define social inclusion, and (2) examine whether these stakeholders perceive SOC as contributing to social inclusion.

Method

Design

This research used a mixed methods approach as it "combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration."[26] More specifically, of the six mixed methods designs proposed by Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson,[27] the concurrent nested strategy was employed. With this strategy, researchers use

multiple methods to gain a broader perspective.[28] Priority can be given to either method, which in this study is given to the qualitative method. The method that is given less priority (i.e. quantitative) is embedded or nested within the predominant method,[29] and serves to seek information from different groups and perspectives. The two data sets are then integrated at the analysis phase.[27, 30] This method was chosen as the researchers wanted to gain primarily an in-depth understanding of various stakeholders' detailed experiences with SOC through semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the researchers wanted to examine whether such perceptions were representative of stakeholders across the country, which was accomplished through an online survey that had open-ended questions as well as closed questions (likert scale). It should also be noted that this study was part of a larger project that examined perceptions of participation in SOC on the development of the athletes.

Participants & Procedure

A total 305 stakeholders participated in this study. Thirty-one of the 305 participants completed an interview and 274 completed an online survey. The interviews were conducted with thirteen athletes and fourteen parents (once on site for the interviews, one of the athletes declined the interview), and four chapter representatives. It was believed that interviewing athletes and parents would provide a solid understanding of the perceived impact of participation in SOC on social inclusion. Furthermore, interviewing chapter representatives was important because they have the most knowledge of the various sport programs being offered in their respective areas and how those programs are structured. The researchers purposefully selected chapter representatives from the largest city within 4 provinces (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia) that span the country of Canada. The largest city within these provinces was chosen because these cities provide the greatest number of opportunities for involvement in SOC within each province.

The average age of the athletes was 16. Only one athlete had already graduated from high school while the others still attend either special education schools or inclusion/integration schools. Their diagnoses varied from Down syndrome, autism, micro deletion 22Q11, and/or learning, developmental, or intellectual disability. The athletes' experiences in competition ranged from local community participation to participation at the world games. Many of the athletes participate in more than one sport; some even participate in three to four SO sports per season. Only two of the athletes also participate in generic sports

(non-SO sport programmes) along with peers without ID.

Participants for the online survey included parents of athletes (N=135) and coaches/volunteers (N=139). Athletes and chapter representatives were intentionally not included in the survey. The rationale for not including the athletes in the survey is that we wanted to ensure that the data collected from athletes was truly from the athletes and not from parents helping the athlete. We did not include chapter representatives because the research study was part of a larger project that focused on examining the perceived impact on the development of the athletes (e.g., life skills and social inclusion). Consequently, the researchers felt that the parents and coaches/volunteers, who interact with the athletes on a consistent basis, would be in the best position to complete the online survey. Inclusion criteria for coaches/volunteers were set to ensure that the data received came from participants who were of age to provide consent and had a minimum level of experience within SOC. The inclusion criteria included: 1) 18 years or older, 2) coaching/volunteering for at least one year, and 3) regular contact (i.e., at least monthly) with the athletes. In addition, coaches/volunteers being recruited were those who participated in the regularly offered SOC official sport programmes (e.g., athletics, swimming, floor hockey, figure skating, and alpine skiing). Therefore, one-time event volunteers such as regional, provincial, national games and/or fundraising volunteers were not eligible for the study.

For coaches/volunteers, sixty-four (46%) of the respondents were male, while 75 (54%) were female. Their age range was 18 to 78 years (Median=47). Fifty-eight of the respondents also identified themselves as a parent of an SOC athlete. For parents, 33 (24%) of the respondents were male and 102 (76%) were female, and their ages ranged from 33 to 80 years (Median=51). Some parents also identified themselves as a coach ($n = 51$) or volunteer ($n = 81$). In addition, there were eight parents who had more than one child with ID participating in SOC as an athlete. The type of ID of that their child/children included: Down syndrome/trisomy 21 ($n = 49$); autism/PDD/PDD-NOS ($n = 24$); developmental delay (n = 21); and other ($n = 41$) such as, but not limited to ADHD, epilepsy, Phalen-McDermid syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Aspergers syndrome, and Fragile X syndrome. While their child/children participated in a variety of sports, the top three sports were aquatics ($n = 64$), 5 & 10-pin bowling ($n = 63$), and athletics/track & field ($n = 52$). These three sports are also the top three sports based on participation numbers within SOC (SOC personal communication, April 27th 2011).

All procedures for this research were approved by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity at the University of Ottawa. The semi-structured interviews and the online surveys were conducted concurrently. For the interviews, SOC was initially contacted to recommend chapter representatives from the four provinces outlined above, who were most familiar with the athletes and programmes in their own chapter. The selected chapter representatives were then contacted via e-mail by the researcher. Then, with the help of the chapter representative, the researcher recruited parents and athletes with varying levels of experience in SOC. All of the interviews with parents and athletes were conducted in person. Two of the interviews with chapter representatives were conducted in person and two via telephone. Although the interviews were originally planned to be in-person, changes to the chapter representative's schedule did not permit an in-person interview. All of the interviews were conducted by the first author; the French and bilingual interviews were conducted with the assistance of a bilingual staff member from Special Olympics Quebec to ensure participants felt comfortable and that the interview utilized the correct terminology. All interviews were audio-recorded.

For the online survey, chapter representatives across Canada (one from each province/territory) were contacted through an e-mail, which explained the details of the research and included the links to the online surveys. In this email, the chapter representatives were also asked to distribute the information and links to the survey to potential participants in whatever way each chapter felt was the most appropriate (e.g. e-mail, newsletter, and/or website). Responses were collected over a three-month period.

Measures

Interviews. The interviews conducted were semi-structured in nature. Three interview guides were developed: one for the athletes, one for the parents and one for the chapter representatives. The questions pertaining to this study on the interview guide for the athletes included those related to how they defined social inclusion, what they felt it meant to be included as well as whether and how they believed their participation in SOC facilitated social inclusion. The questions pertaining to this study on the interview guides for the parents and chapter representatives included those related to general experience with SOC, non-SOC sport experience, and perceptions of whether and how SOC was facilitating social inclusion. In addition, the interview guide for the parents also included questions pertaining to their experiences of their child in various contexts (school, sport, community) as well as specific experiences with their child

regarding social inclusion. The interview guide for the chapter representatives also included questions pertaining to their perceptions of the role of SOC in social inclusion and how they currently approach social inclusion. The interviews with the athletes lasted between 20-40 minutes, while the interviews with the parents lasted between 30 minutes to 2 hours, and with the chapter representatives between 45 minutes to1.5 hours.

Online survey. Two surveys were created on Survey Monkey; one for parents, and one for coaches/volunteers. Both surveys were offered in both Canadian official languages (i.e., English and French). As mentioned above, this study was part of a larger study. For this larger study there were six sections on the parent survey and three on the coach/volunteer survey.

However, for this study, only the sections on demographics, SOC involvement, and questions pertaining to the perceptions of social inclusion were used from the survey. With regards to social inclusion, 1 survey question asked participants whether they perceive SOC as contributing to social inclusion in which they responded on a 5-point Likert scale (totally disagree to totally agree). Following this question was an open-ended section with two questions. The first asked participants to explain their rationale for selecting the answer to the first question (e.g., disagree or agree) and the second asked them to provide an example, if any, which related to their experiences with SOC regarding social inclusion.

Data Analysis

To analyze qualitative data, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then subjected to an inductive thematic analysis.[31] Through this thematic analysis, the data were broken into smaller meaning units and organised by themes and categories.[31] Braun and Clarke[31] argued that using a thematic analysis allows for flexibility when analyzing the data, because it allows for the triangulation of several participants' perceptions. First, the transcribed data was read and re-read several times. During this step initial thoughts and ideas were noted. Second, codes were generated that identified pertinent features that supported the overall purpose of the research. Third, common codes were combined into themes, which were labeled and defined. Fourth, relevant quotations that supported the emerging themes were identified and inserted under the relevant theme. The trustworthiness of the data was assured through a collaborative approach to analysis.[32] The development and labelling of themes as well as the identification of pertinent quotes was completed by both authors.

Any small discrepancies between researchers in the analysis process were identified (e.g., under which theme some of the quotes fit best) and discussed until an agreement was reached.

To organize data and help in the identification of quotes that supported the emergent themes, NVivo 7.0 was used. Participant identification codes are provided for each quote (A=Athlete, P=Parent, CR= Chapter Representative, CV= Coach/Volunteer, I= Interview, S=Survey) along with numbers to identify the order in which the participants were interviewed or online responses were submitted. For example, a third parent interviewed was coded PI3.
Quantitative data from the online survey were analyzed using SPSS 18.0. More specifically, descriptive statistics were conducted to examine the mean scores of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact SOC has on social inclusion. A Between Groups ANOVA was conducted to examine if there were any significant differences between the mean scores between stakeholders who identified as parents only, coaches only or those who identified as both a parent and a coach.

Results

Four themes emerged from the qualitative analysis: (1) Individuals have varying definitions of SI, (2) Stakeholders perceive SO as contributing to social inclusion while recognizing that the programme is largely exclusive, (3) Participation in SO provides opportunities to participate in generic sports, and (4) Participation in SO has a positive impact on inclusion at school and in the broader community. The quantitative results are incorporated into the qualitative findings, in particular under the second theme, in order to provide a more integrated summary of the findings.

Individuals have varying definitions of social inclusion. The interviews with the athletes, parents and chapter representatives, showed that there were variations among the responses regarding the definition of social inclusion. The athletes focused primarily on the social aspect of social inclusion. It was observed that when the athletes were asked about what social inclusion meant to them, they responded by talking about what inclusion feels like. For example one athlete stated: "When people invite me over to activities is probably when I feel included… then I feel happy." (AI1) Another athlete stated:

If someone mentions that they are going somewhere and ask if I'd like to go or stuff like that. I find that's a big way that I know I'm included in a group, not being left out. That's the way I really notice that people are really liking me or

trying to include me. (AI6)

Although the parents had similar ideas to the athletes, there appeared to be greater variations because they spoke about the social aspect "to feel a part of a network that is like a family unit and comfortable to them," (PI1) "Total acceptance of any disability" (PI2) but also talked about being able to function independently within society: "be able to get work with other people, to have an apartment, to be autonomous." (PI3) Still other parents shared that to them social inclusion was "being as close to normal as possible" (PI4) and "to be accepted at the level that you are able to be included in the society." (PI5)

Interestingly, one parent noted that social inclusion is often defined differently for each individual: "Social inclusion for some athletes from what I can see, it would be very different from what it would be for my daughter." (PI1)

While some parents struggled to provide one definition social inclusion, all parents agreed that social inclusion goes beyond providing physical opportunities. The following quote demonstrates many of the thoughts shared by the parents interviewed:

As an ID child, you don't get invited to birthday parties, after school events, sleepovers. They're not included. So even though there's full inclusion [talking about the school physically included children with ID in the classroom] and they may have friends, it doesn't mean they want to come over for a play date…I guess social inclusion is being socially accepted regardless of your disability, whatever it may be. That would be a perfect world, wouldn't it? (PI2)

Similar to parents, the chapter representatives did not appear to have one agreed-upon definition of social inclusion: "Well, I don't think we have a formal definition" (CRI2) but did recognize that it goes beyond physical inclusion:

When we talk about social inclusion, we see it not specific to SOC... So we look at inclusion as inclusion in society, so that there is nothing essentially their "disability" that prevents them from whatever they want to do. So it's a broad broad broad…and so our focus isn't inclusion is this, inclusion is being on a generic team. We just want them to be active, be involved. Do whatever they want to do. (CRI4)

Stakeholders perceive SOC as contributing to social inclusion while recognizing that the programme is largely exclusive. The majority of stakeholders in both the interviews and online surveys perceived SO as helping to facilitate social inclusion.

The quantitative data from the online surveys indicated that overall participants perceived SO as contributing to social inclusion. The overall mean score for parents and coaches/volunteers combined was 4.26 (SD = .92) on a 5-point Likert scale. When looking at the frequency distribution of scores it showed that 6% of respondents either strongly disagreed (2%) or disagreed (4%) that SO contributed to social inclusion while 73% agreed (37%) or strongly agreed (36%) that SO contributed to social inclusion. Eleven percent of the respondents were neutral. In addition, the results of the ANOVA examining differences between stakeholders who identified as parents only (M=4.17, SD=0.92), coach/volunteer only (M=4.38, SD=0.71) or those who identified as both a parent and a coach/volunteer (M=4.22; SD=1.01) was not significant (F=1.40, p=0.2537).

The quantitative findings were strongly supported by the qualitative findings. As one stakeholder shared:

I have been involved with many organizations in the last 20 years that support or advocate or provide services for people with intellectual challenges. I can unequivocally say that I have not met another organization that comes close to meeting SO success in contributing to social inclusion of the athletes. (CVS99)

In addition to simply stating that SOC was contributing to social inclusion, the participants provided numerous examples of how SOC contributes to social inclusion by providing opportunities for individuals with an ID to show others (individuals without an ID) their abilities. As one of the parent shared, "Without SOC, my child would not have had the chance to show people, so called 'normal', his sport and social abilities." (PS6) A coach/volunteer explained how participating in SO programmes provides athletes with concrete experiences that they can share with others "[a]s athletes go about meeting people in the public, participate in competition, they have something they can talk about with others in the community. They can share their knowledge of sport, talk about their accomplishments as an athlete." (CVS72) Similarly, a chapter representative explained that social inclusion may be fostered because SOC increases "the awareness of the fact that our athletes are contributing individuals in the society and that they can compete in the highest levels with the generic sporting environment or the SO environment and be competitive." (CRI4) Perhaps this parent summed it up best when she shared her dreams for society and how SOC is contributing to that dream: "I would like to see a world where people saw the person, not the disability. SO helps the community do this." (PS46)

Although the participants in this study valued SOC for opportunities that helped increase social inclusion, it is important to point out that the participants recognized SOC as an exclusive organization. As one parent explained,"[SOC] doesn't include people from all aspects of society but only those with special needs." (PS58) Another parent had a different view in that although the organization provides programming to individuals with ID, many others who are involved do not have an ID. The parent stated, "Although SO appears to be segregated, the more I gain experience, the more I see that it includes the intellectually delayed population as well as the "generic" population through coaches, volunteers, supporters and other family members." (PS64)

In addition, the participants recognized that SOC only involving individuals with an ID has both positive and potentially negative impacts. One coach/volunteer stated:

I think that SO provides athletes with the opportunity to develop socially with their fellow athletes and coaches but also segregates them from the mainstream athletic and social world. There is good and bad to this as the SO programme provides them with a safe and supportive environment of like individuals which definitely supports development of social skills but it also labels them as "special" and separate from "regular" programmes and people. (CVS31)

Similarly, a parent shared the following:
Although SO segregates people with developmental disabilities, it provides exposure to activities that the normal population enjoy, opportunities to work with 'normal' people, e.g. coaches, supporters, siblings, etc. and other people see our children in an environment they also enjoy...and others can recognize the skills and attributes of our children. (PS76)

The largest positive perception of SOC being exclusive was that it allowed for all youth with an ID to have a place in which to participate in sport, which would not be possible in the current structures of mainstream sport. A chapter representative summarizes this nicely with the following quote: "Having a programme that is not as inclusive, for us, we were able to take any athlete no matter what their level of ability no matter how autonomous they were." (CRI2) Similarly, a parent stated:

I love that aspect of it that everybody is included, whether they are someone who walks the 400 or my daughter who runs it. They all have an equal chance…where as…

mainstream, everybody's bunched into one…That's one thing I love about SO, the way everybody gets a chance. Not just the top guys. (PI8)

The athletes support the previous statement, and the following quote indicates how these athletes feel about having a program that is just for them:

I feel that [SOC] are just wonderful. They really fit to everyone's needs. They don't just say here's certain amounts of athletes that can do our programs, the rest of you I'm sorry … you're not going to feel excluded from the rest of the group. You can still do the same thing you are doing…. I find that's been very good to me in the SO programs. (AI3)

Furthermore, many parents, expressed problems with contexts, such as school, which focus solely on inclusion. For example, one parent expressed frustration with only having the inclusion option at school: "The regular kids, they just don't integrate them no matter how much you try. The school doesn't do anything for them, and this [SOC] is the venue for them." (PI1) Similarly, another parent shared: "a lot of kids that don't have disabilities can be very cruel, so [her daughter] had a lot of problems with that in some of the school areas." (PI10) As a result, parents discussed that full inclusion is not always positive and they value SOC because it is an 'exclusive' programme designed just for their children with ID. Another parent summarized the situation well by stating, "exclusion with a bit of inclusion enhances that inclusion." (PI5)

Participation in SOC provides opportunities to participate in generic sport. Apart from discussing that SOC fosters social inclusion for individuals with ID, participants consistently discussed the opportunities provided by SOC to participate in generic sport as an important mechanism for increasing social inclusion. To provide a little context, the following quote from one of the chapter representatives explains how SOC can help athletes participate in generic sport programmes with non-ID youth:

The skills they've learned in the SO environment transgress into the generic sport environment. So they're socially accepted in that environment because they've learned proper communication skills, they've learned the respect, they've learned how to communicate with whether it be SO athletes or non-SO athletes. (CRI4)

This explanation was supported by numerous examples from the athletes, parents and coach/volunteers of how

participation in SOC programming has led to opportunities for inclusion in generic sport. As one athlete shared:

I joined the school swimming team because I'm good at swimming, and I'm part of SO, so might as well join the swim team. I made it to OFSAA (Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations) and came in 6th for my race, so considering I was against that doesn't have disability, I did pretty well. (AI3)

Similarly, a parent expressed:

My daughter was picked to participate in the Provincial Summer Games. These athletes were made to feel and believe that they are just as valuable as any other person...SO is proof that they are valuable and matter. She feels she has possibilities and dreams that can take her beyond and further with SO. (PS89)

Another parent expressed how her daughter "has achieved inclusion in her skating club with the help of her coach and the belief of the parent committee that my daughter has as much to contribute to their children as their children have to give to my daughter." (PS72)

The coaches/volunteers also provided a number of examples of how SO programmes are now integrated with generic programming which they also believed facilitated social inclusion. As one coach/volunteer explained "SO curling athletes are welcomed in the curling club as equal members. Athletes participate in regular curling draws and bonspiels and are asked to volunteer in the club as are other members. Socializing after games with opponents is commonplace." (CVS26) Similarly, a coach/volunteer provided an example in her skating programme:

Our SO athletes are included in the 'generic' skating sessions and do the same programme as the generic skaters at the same level and/or above their skating and abilities...and in turn gives them confidence to handle most social situations outside the sport area. (CVS14)

Participation in SOC has a positive impact on inclusion at school and in the broader community. The participants shared their experiences of how participation in SOC has had a positive impact on social inclusion at school and in the broader community. The athletes discussed how participation in SOC has led to greater recognition by non-ID peers at school. As one athlete explained "In school, they had my picture in school in the bulletin board, they saw my picture and now they know I'm a speed skater and that's

why I'm a fast speed skater in school." (AI5) Similarly another athlete stated "It impresses people that I became…I have been at the Canada Games. I told them then it's ah, cool." (AI10)

Other athletes discussed how participating in sports allowed them to have [sports] in common to talk to and make friends with non-ID peers at school. One athlete explained "I think it helped me out a lot in school to break out, to look out for more friends." (AI6) A second athlete shared a similar experience and reports that "I think I was a little shy before [participating in SOC], but I'm actually talking more, talking to more people." (AI8)

Similar to the athletes, the parents extensively discussed how before their children participated in SOC they were not as valued or respected by teachers and/or peers. As one parent explained:

Because my son is functionally disabled with an IQ of less than the 1st percentile. He was treated by many teachers and a principal as having no value. Unteachable and a waste of their time. Through his successful acquisition of sport skills and the learned ability to work cooperatively with teammates and coaches he showed many educators that we are all teachable…He landed himself on the honor roll in high-school for A`s in PE and Art… Today because of SO my son has shown that he is teachable he can learn and he can take those skills and use them in other areas of his life. (PS77)

Another parent shared:

My daughter was not allowed to participate in extracurricular sports during most of her elementary school until she was validated by winning some medals at SO winter games. After she showed her medals, it opened some minds up and she was allowed to participate in the end of year talent show. Although her classmates didn't want to perform with her at first, she had the confidence to perform a dance solo with a resulting genuine standing ovation. I think it was the first time some people recognized that she also had some talents. In following talent shows, some of the more 'popular' non-disabled students wanted to perform with our daughter. Afterwards she was permitted to try out for the volleyball, basketball and soccer teams. When our daughter scored a goal at one of the interscholastic games, the team and audience were so beside themselves with pride. This opened up many other parents', students' eyes as well. (PS64)

Another parent also shared how as a result of students volunteering with SOC, her son has developed long lasting friendships:

Several students that attended the same high school as our son decided to come out and volunteer at the provincial games…over the course of the games...friendships developed and social barriers went by the wayside. During the remainder of our son's high school years he was invited to dances, movies and community events. He is now 22 and when his friends return home from university they look him up and they get together. (PS52)

SOC was also perceived by stakeholders as having an impact on social inclusion in the broader community. For example, a chapter representative explained how a recent publicity campaign that took place in one province resulted in praises from other organizations and that SOC is now "being used as an example by [a provincial association for community living] as opposed to being completely almost rejected back 12 years ago." (CRI2)

A number of parents maintain that SOC has encouraged community acknowledgement of their children's accomplishments, which indicates that SOC has an impact beyond the individual. As one parent expressed "My daughter was chosen by her community to light the cauldron at the 2010 Olympic torch run." (PS74) Another parent expressed an award her son received through SOC led to significant recognition in the community:

My son suddenly was noticed in our community as an athlete not just as a special needs person. His involvement seemed to teach all around us that the SO athletes are the same as any other athlete - must train; take disappointments as well as all the good things; he received a lot of press which goes far for inclusion in my opinion. (PS54)

In addition to being recognized publicly, stakeholders also provided examples of how skills learned through participation in SOC have led to more involvement in the community. One parent stated "[My daughter] works part-time and I feel her involvement in Special Olympics has assisted in her verbal skills to succeed at her job." (PS14) Similarly, a coach/volunteer shared "I have seen athletes develop self-confidence in other areas of their personal life after being involved in SOC, getting jobs in the community, public speaking, travel, interpersonal relationships." (CVS10)

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine from the perspectives of various stakeholders, the perceived impact and role of SOC in social inclusion for individuals with an ID. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that stakeholders perceive SOC as contributing to social inclusion. Although the quantitative data is a relatively small piece of the overall data collected in this study, it is an important piece that reflects the voices of numerous parents and coaches/volunteers from across Canada who did not have an opportunity to be interviewed. In particular, these findings demonstrate that the belief that SOC contributes to social inclusion is not only a belief that exists among the small sample of the interviewed chapter representatives, parents, and athletes but that this belief is held by numerous parents and coaches/volunteers across Canada.

The qualitative results indicated that social inclusion was not an easy concept to define because the definitions from athletes, parents, coaches/volunteers and chapter representatives varied. Definitions ranged from feeling or being included in social events, to being able to function independently in the world, to full integration into society at multiple levels. Research by Frazee[9] also revealed varying definitions of social inclusion among youth with physical disabilities. Therefore, it appears that the definition of social inclusion is often self-perceptive and self-determined. However, researchers assert that social inclusion is about the citizenship of the individual and being respected as a valued contributor who has rights, knowledge and power.[9, 33] More research is needed to examine factors that lead to variations in the definitions of social inclusion and the possible consequences on how social inclusion is fostered within our institutions when individuals within a society define and perceive social inclusion a certain way. Research has examined the barriers that lead to social inclusion for individuals with ID,[19, 34] which recognizes that attitudes play an important role in the perceptions of inclusion. Siperstein et al[19] found that people worldwide rated individuals with ID rather low on a variety of capabilities in general and even lower for capabilities within mainstream society. For example, people rated individuals with ID as much more capable of playing sport with other individuals with ID but very low in terms of capability to participate in sport with individuals without ID. Moreover, people around the world also believed that within societal institutions such as school and work, individuals with ID would cause more accidents, have low productivity, cause disciplinary problems and have a negative impact on individuals without an ID within these

institutions. It is hypothesized that such negative perceptions of individuals with an ID stem from the lack of services, support, and opportunities afforded to individuals with ID to be able to show society their true capabilities. Hall[34] discusses that although progress has been made with regards to the physical inclusion of individuals with ID (e.g., providing employment, independent living), such experiences have not been positive for the majority of individuals with an ID as the focus has been primarily on physical integration and not true 'social' integration, which entails a sense of belonging. Hall[34] asserts that it is only through continued efforts of actively involving and supporting individuals with ID in our institutions that true social inclusion will occur.

The majority of stakeholders in this study did perceive SOC as positively contributing to social inclusion. However, the results also revealed that some, albeit a very small minority (6%), disagreed. Comments from the interviews and online surveys showed that in these cases individuals saw SOC as an organization that segregates individuals with ID from those without ID. When examining the results in more detail, it became more apparent that although it is recognized by stakeholders that SOC does segregate and can have negative implications, this segregation was mostly perceived as valuable. Participants explained that SOC provides individuals with ID an opportunity to be in an environment that is open to all, supportive, increases confidence, and fosters the development of positive peer relationships. SOC was also perceived as valuable because in other societal institutions such as school, social inclusion was not working as planned. Many of the parents discussed how at school their children are integrated physically into regular classrooms, but there are no other support systems in place to foster social inclusion. As a result, the school system negatively impacted children with ID, because there is little interaction, friendship and/or recognition by non-ID peers.   On the other hand, the safe and supportive environments that SOC provides are greatly needed. These findings are supported by a recent paper by Graham and Harwood,[35] which discusses the ongoing difficulties that schools often experience with fostering inclusion. Their research supports that effective policies promoting inclusion have to be innovative and involve enhancing the capabilities of the students and teachers, rather than just a decision to be inclusive. Thus, in this study, SO was perceived as a stronger and safer place for individuals with ID to be and was perceived as providing opportunities that are not available to individuals with ID within the context of school.

Moreover, many of the stakeholders perceive that participation in SOC facilitated social inclusion for SOC participants both within and beyond the context of sport. Going back to the definition used for this study by Bailey,[17] the results support all four dimensions of social inclusion. Although individuals with ID participated primarily in SO programmes, such participation led to opportunities and experiences in non-SO or non-disability specific sport programs (sometimes referred to as generic sport) that was perceived as minimizing the variety of distances that exist between individuals with an ID and those without an ID (spatial dimension). Parents also expressed that participation in SO programming allowed their children to showcase their skills to others, which ultimately led to increased interaction and acceptance among non-ID peers, particularly at school (relation dimension). Further, stakeholders discussed how participation in SO led to the development of various life and sport skills that could be transferred to non-SO (generic) sport and work (functional dimension). Finally, stakeholders shared their perceptions of how participation in SO programming helped individuals with an ID extend their social network in the community through opportunities to be recognized for the awards and medals they received that led to an increase in civic pride (power dimension).

Therefore, it appears that SOC may play an important role in social inclusion even though the majority of their day-to-day programming focuses only on individuals with ID. This may in part be explained by Thomas,[33] who discusses the duality of restrictive forces on individuals with disabilities. Thomas explains that on the one hand, persons with disabilities can face numerous barriers and restrictions that can impact their active participation in the social world. This aspect has thus far been the center of attention in promoting social inclusion which involves providing access by eliminating physical, structural, and systematic barriers. In addition, persons with disabilities may also face restrictions in feeling secure and feeling self-worthy, which is why researchers have also advocated for access to respect, access to identity and being oneself. As mentioned above, various definitions of social inclusion include aspects with regards to being respected as a valued contributor who has rights, knowledge, and power.[29] It appears that schools, a context in which individuals with ID spend a lot of time, still need to work towards breaking down barriers related to respecting and valuing those with ID and not just physical integration into classrooms. Siperstein et al[19] have proposed a number of recommendations for breaking down the existing barriers to social inclusion. Within schools, one recommendation was to expand school-based SOC programming. This form of action is also supported by the

research of Widaman and Siperstein[21] that showed substantial increases for support of social inclusion with greater numbers of individuals involved in SO. A second recommendation put forth was to have more professional development opportunities to prepare staff within schools to effectively foster inclusion beyond physical integration. A third recommendation encourages teachers to integrate curriculum to increase students awareness of the abilities of individuals with ID by showing videos, sharing materials related to SO or having students volunteer for SO or join a SO Unified Sports team. Recommendations for the broader community with regards to how they can take action to promote social inclusion included opening up community recreation centres and sporting venues to individuals with ID, integrating SO programmes into existing sporting activities or events, encouraging community members to get involved with SO or promoting businesses to sponsor SO or hire individuals with ID, and providing public recognition for achievements of individuals with ID.

Although the results of the study indicated that SOC is perceived as contributing to social inclusion, a number of limitations exist for the present study. First, the data collected are participants' perceptions rather than an objective evaluation of whether SOC is contributing to social inclusion. Second, it is possible that the study's participants are biased regarding how well SO contributes to social inclusion, given that they are and continue to be active participants in SOC. Therefore, several future research recommendations can be made. First, as generic sport opportunities were said to be one initiative that many chapters set out to provide for their athletes, research should be conducted to examine the number and impact of such initiatives within community sport. This may be particularly relevant given the recent research that has shown positive outcomes for the Unified Sports initiative that brings athletes with ID together with athletes without ID.[15, 36] Second, future research using a greater variety of methods (e.g., observations) to understand the success of social inclusion through SO is warranted. Third, longitudinal research should also be conducted to examine how SOC can influence athlete experiences of social inclusion over time.

Conclusion

Despite years of aggressively promoting social inclusion, especially in the education sector, the reality is that social inclusion is complex. This study is one of the first studies to examine whether stakeholders involved in SOC perceive the organization as fostering social inclusion. Although there is still much to be done to foster social inclusion[9, 19, 33-35] the

SOC stakeholders involved in this study perceive SOC as fostering social inclusion both within and beyond the context of sport by providing opportunities to develop and transfer skills outside of SOC programs, occasions to participate in mainstream sport, increased and enhanced relationships with peers and adults without ID, and greater participation in the broader community. As research has found such opportunities[19, 34] are key to changing attitudes towards individuals with ID so that they are viewed as true citizens who are respected and valued for their contributions to society.

Acknowledgements

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Original Research

Paralympic sport as a vehicle for social change in Bermuda and Ghana

Anjali J. Forber-Pratt[1]

[1] Vanderbilt University, Department of Human & Organizational Development, USA

Corresponding author email: anjali.forber.pratt@vanderbilt.edu

Abstract

Background: Sport for persons with disabilities provides health, psychosocial well-being, and quality of life benefits.[1-3] Research has documented the benefits of sport for athletes without disabilities in resource-poor nations. However, less is known about these benefits for athletes with disabilities in nations with an emerging disability sport culture. This qualitative study sought to answer: (1) What are the effects of sport programmes for persons with disabilities on psychosocial development, well-being and quality of life? (2) How has the implementation of sport programmes for persons with disabilities affected the perceptions of disability by the community in these nations? **Method:** Case study research design, with data collected from unstructured participant observations from researcher field notes, fieldwork, archival media files, and interviews, was used to capture experiences of individuals. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with athletes, coaches, programme coordinators and parents from Bermuda and Ghana (n=13). Analysis was performed using a modified van Kaam approach. **Results:** Interviewees reported that participation in Paralympic sport has benefits to one's own perception of self, benefits to others' perception of disability as well as instilling a sense of civic responsibility to continue educating others. **Conclusions:** Sport participation allowed for athletes with disabilities from Bermuda and Ghana to become contributing members of their society and leaders. These individuals capitalize on showing how sport can be a vehicle to change perceptions and stereotypes about disability.

Introduction

Sport for persons with disabilities provides health, psychosocial well-being, and quality of life benefits. [4-6] The United Nations[7] estimates that 10% of the world's population has some type of disability and 80% live in developing countries. Beyond the aforementioned benefits, additional positive outcomes due to participation in sport for persons with disabilities have been documented.[1, 6, 9, 10] Athletes report gains in confidence and self-esteem through sport participation.[10-14] Additionally, athletes report a healthier sense of identity due to participation in sport[1, 10] and a higher quality of life.[6, 14] Participation in sport supports athletes with disabilities to become contributing members of society and leaders and provides a context for disability culture to thrive by providing athletes with a sense of community. Individuals interact with one another around the shared common activity of sport, and through this bond, have the opportunity to develop shared values and customs to define disability sport culture. For individuals from nations with emerging Paralympic sport programs, this connection to other athletes with disabilities has the potential to be pivotal. These individuals use sport as a vehicle to change perceptions and stereotypes about disability.[5, 14, 15] Sport is also seen as a vehicle of social change through empowerment[16-23] and education.[5, 24-26]

In the context of disability sport, Brittain explored perceptions of disability through the eyes of athletes from a country with a fairly well-established Paralympic programme. Interestingly, in this study and context, participants reported a lack of awareness of the effects that

societal perceptions of disability could have on their lives. However, in the two countries described throughout, individuals appeared to be keenly aware of societal perceptions and the ramifications affecting their lives. Disability sport offers the potential for positive subjectivity, a changed self-understanding, and increased sense of personal empowerment.[10]

Less is known about the benefits of disability sport culture in nations with emerging Paralympic programmes. The picture is convoluted because of access to sport, availability of coaching and specialized equipment, and stereotypes about disability among others.[5, 27-29] Stambulova and Alfermann [30] encourage researchers to select specific frameworks for describing cultural contexts. Considering the stereotypes and climate towards disability, overlaying what is known about disability culture allows us to begin to dive deeper into the meaningfulness of sport in these contexts to combat stereotypes.

Carol Gill, one of the first to describe disability culture, explains the complexities as:

Certainly, our longstanding social oppression, but also our emerging art and humor, our piecing together of our history, our evolving language and symbols, our remarkably unified worldview, beliefs and values, and our strategies for surviving and thriving . . . the most compelling evidence of a disability culture is the vitality and universality of these elements.[31]

Historically, Gill[31] wrote about disability culture as the disability rights movement was just gaining national traction. While there may be subcultures within disability culture, the overarching premise of disability culture provides a context to explore the roles in which disability sport contributes to the development of shared beliefs, values and sense of being.

Stereotypes and stigmas also affect persons with disabilities. However, having a culture or a community to rely on can help to process these events and to feel empowered. One such stigma is ableism, or discrimination against people based on physical ability in favour of those without disabilities. As part of a programme evaluation report, Ferreyra[32] explained the heightened risk that adolescent females with physical disabilities have for developing and maintaining their sense of self because of stigmas and oppression. However, Forber-Pratt and Aragon[33] found that being an integral member of disability culture equips individuals to truly synthesize their identity and empower others through teaching about disability. Likewise, Smith

and Sparkes[34] discussed the shaping of identity and reconstructing a new sense of self, following a spinal cord injury in the context of disability sport. This study explores how within the environment of sport and emerging disability sport programs, these elements of disability culture are developed.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing from sociocultural theory,[35] it is important to explore the interaction between people and the culture in which they live, or in this case people from nations with an emerging Paralympic sport movement. Particular to this study, disability culture plays a role in how athletes with disabilities synthesize their disability identity and are able to further social change in their home country. Related, social ecological theory [36] depicts the dynamic interplay between individuals, their social environments and the mutual influence one has on the other. Both theories served as theoretical basis for analysis. Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how individuals influence learning across these contexts, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes impact how learning takes place. It is imperative to consider beliefs about disability, disability culture as well as the broader culture of sport. Smith and Sparkes[37-40] build the case for and use narrative analyses to describe sociocultural circumstances on the lives of individuals with disabilities. It is imperative to continue adding to our empirical knowledge of beliefs about disability, disability culture as well as the broader culture of sport. Because popular media takes and further perpetuates stereotypes and stigmas about disability,[41] it is through empirical research that we can better understand the role that sport has on beliefs about disability.

Paralympic Sport

The Paralympic Games, the second largest sporting event in the world, is an elite level competition for athletes with disabilities.[42] In 1948, coinciding with the timing of the Olympic Games, the Stoke Mandeville Games occurred marking an important milestone in terms of competition for athletes with disabilities. This later evolved into the Paralympic Games which were first held in Rome, Italy in 1960 with 400 athletes from 23 countries. The most recent summer Games in London welcomed 4,237 athletes from 164 countries in 2012.[43] The number of countries participating in international disability sport has increased over time. Statistics available as of 2009 report nearly a quarter of developing countries had no sport opportunities for persons with disabilities.[29] Lauff recommended further exploration into the reasons for developing nations'

participation in international competitive disability sport, which is what this study sought to address by capturing perspectives from athletes, coaches and parents. The purpose of this study was to describe the benefits of sport programs for persons with disabilities on psychosocial development in addition to the effects on perceptions of disability by the community in these nations.

Method

Design

This study employed a case study research design, as the goal was to describe experiences related to Paralympic sport development, disability, and the culture of sport in a natural context.[44, 45] Our intent was to describe what two different nations were doing in this arena both by examining "the meanings that the research participants ascribe to their life and environment, contextual factors that influence their life, a series of events and their possible outcomes, and the new or unusual in society." [42] Using this research design, it was possible to begin to build an understanding about grassroots Paralympic sport development.This qualitative study sought to answer:

(1) What are the effects of sport programmes on persons with disabilities on psychosocial development, well-being and quality of life?

(2) How has the implementation of sport programmes for persons with disabilities affected the perceptions of disability by the community in these nations?

Case study research design, with data collected from unstructured observations from researcher field notes, fieldwork, archival media files, and interviews were used to capture experiences of individuals from two countries at various stages in developing Paralympic sport.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois, which was the authors' University at the time of this study, approved this study. Its participants were read an assent statement to gain their verbal consent for participation. It was explained in the assent statement that pseudonyms would be used. It was also explained that due to the small number of athletes with disabilities from these nations that it was possible for knowledgeable readers exposed to the world of Paralympic sport could ascertain their true identity. Despite this, all participants granted their permission to be involved in this study.

Participants

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with athletes with disabilities (n=7), coaches (including one parent-coach) (n=2), programme coordinators (n=3) and parents (n=1) from Bermuda and Ghana (Totals from both countries = 13). There were four types of disabilities and nature of impairments included: paralysis from birth, polio, amputation, and paralysis due to an accident.

Table One: *List of participants*

Pseudonymn	Country	Role
Jane	Bermuda	Athlete / Paralympian
Tano	Ghana	Athlete / Paralympian
Antobam	Ghana	Athlete / Paralympian
Abeeku	Ghana	Athlete
Amir	Ghana	Athlete
Amy	Ghana	Coach
Linda	Bermuda	Parent
John	Ghana	Programme Coordinator
Kip	Bermuda	Coach / Parent
Coujoe	Ghana	Athlete
Tina	Bermuda	Programme Coordinator
Mensah	Ghana	Athlete / Paralympian
Tim	Ghana	Programme Administrator

Interviews were conducted leading up to or immediately following the 2012 Paralympic Games. Additional information was gathered through publically available media including news interviews and newspaper stories from the Royal News Gazette and online articles from BBC and CNN about the London 2012 Paralympic Games featuring athletes from Bermuda or Ghana and their respective programs. Both countries had athletes at the 2012 London Paralympic Games. While Bermuda had representation at the Paralympic Games since 1996, this was only in the sport of equestrian until 2012 when they had one athlete compete in athletics. Ghana had athletes competing in the summer Paralympic Games since 2004 in athletics and powerlifting. However, in 2004 and 2008, the Ghanaian athletes qualified based on wildcard selection, as opposed to qualifying by right and attaining qualification marks among other prerequisites outlined by the International Paralympic

Committee. In 2012, Ghana sent an athlete to compete in cycling, along with three other athletes in athletics. As Table 1 shows, there were a relatively small number of participants involved in this study. The reason for this is that Paralympic sport is still very new in both countries and few athletes have made it to the Paralympic level. Considering this, interviews included that were conducted with Paralympic aspirants in addition to Paralympians. Athletes' specific sport and type of disability were not included in Table 1 to preserve anonymity and protect the identities of the athletes.

Limitations of the Design

While this approach afforded the opportunity for a variety of perspectives to be captured from both participating countries about para-sport, there were also several limitations. Firstly, there were a low number of participants, which makes it difficult to generalize the. However, much can be learned from the cases presented. In order to show the unique story of Paralympic sport development and what it meant in these countries, this design provided a starting point to do just that. Methodologically, case study research does have its own limitations, but there are also significant benefits that outweigh these.[44] Case study is a necessary and sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences; this method was appropriate for this project and allowed for exploring multiple perspectives about para-sport from each country.

Settings

There were two countries involved with this study. This section is designed to provide an overview of the landscape of disability and perceptions of disability and sport. For a larger discussion regarding the similarities and differences of the two countries related to disability and sport, refer to Forber-Pratt, Scott and Driscoll.[46] These countries have an emerging disability culture and are surfacing in the area of disability sport. These countries were selected because of their up-and-coming Paralympic programs.[26] The picture of disability in these countries highlights the lack of policies, protections and general acceptance of disability thereby positioning the findings as valuable to the sport for development literature. Individuals with disabilities in these settings come from a marginalized population where the very concept of disability sport is foreign to most citizens. In order to successfully contribute to the development of disability sport in both of these nations, an understanding of the athletes with disabilities background, cultural roots and struggles of assimilation must be considered. Social

ecologically, understanding and interrogating these athletes' roots and relationships shed light on the role that sport for development plays in these nations.

Ghana

As reported by the Ghana Federation of the Disabled,[47] the World Health Organisation reports that the Republic of Ghana has about 2.5 million people with disabilities, which is roughly 10% of the entire country. From that demographic, 70% are illiterate due to lack of educational access. Additionally, the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in Ghana is between 80-90%. From the researchers' experiences, many individuals with disabilities in Accra, Ghana acquired their disabilities from polio or HIV/AIDS, and were therefore eligible for Paralympic sport.

In 2010, the Ghanaian National Council on Persons with Disabilities ran a disability awareness campaign to begin to counter deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes that refer to disability as a "curse," and "linked to witchcraft." [48] Ghanaian society is highly traditional with more than two hundred ethnic and tribal groups. Families struggle to explain why a child is born with a disability. The current explanation for many families is that the anger of the gods has been visited on them.[48] Ghanaian society is highly traditional with more than two hundred ethnic and tribal groups. Many hold the belief that there is no reason a family can give to explain why a child is born with a disability except that the anger of the gods has been visited on them.[49] Such stigma and discrimination results in parents hiding and shunning children with disabilities and creates a situation where people with disabilities are unable to get work as they are seen as both "bad" and incapable of doing anything. This significantly impacts people's quality of life and ability to participate in society. This was also important to be aware of in terms of the culture towards individuals with disabilities in this nation.

In terms of laws and policies, the Persons with Disabilities Act, which was designed to provide persons with disabilities with basic social, cultural and civil rights, was passed in Ghana in 2006. This came about through advocacy efforts of organisations such as the Ghana Federation of the Disabled, but the general sentiment of persons with disabilities in Ghana is that few of the bill's provisions have been enacted. Individuals with disabilities in Ghana acknowledge incremental change that has occurred since its passing, but feel their lives are mostly the same as when the law did not exist.[26] It is worth noting that Ghana did sign on

to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 and later ratified it in 2012. Oduro believes that over time, the Persons with Disability Act will further empower organisations serving people with disabilities to work towards a more inclusive society and a rights-based approach to disability.[50] After Ghana ratified the CRPD in 2012, the Ghana Federation of the Disabled lobbied the government to strengthen the Persons with Disabilities Act.

Bermuda

Bermuda is a small island nation of 20.6 square miles. The number of persons with disabilities from the 2000 Census in Bermuda was 2,832, which accounts for roughly 4.5% of the population. The largest age bracket of individuals with disabilities was 16-64. With regard to employment, 7% of those eligible to work reported being unemployed. In terms of work, the leading types of jobs for persons with disabilities are production, transport, service and clerical. It was difficult to find comprehensive educational statistics about individuals with disabilities in Bermuda because it was not included in the Census report.

Anecdotally, it became apparent from previous fieldwork in Bermuda that the prevailing attitude was that children were sent to special schools and were not integrated into mainstream schools. In order for their daughter with a disability to get an education, one family personally funded and constructed ramps and an elevator. Much of the island is not accessible to individuals with disabilities. The physical barriers create a culture of stigma and discrimination that individuals describe as a feeling of isolation. There is only one disability organisation on the island that works hard to serve the needs of all individuals with disabilities. This organisation worked to establish a national advisory council on disabilities which was established in 2005 with the goal of adopting laws/policies to protect persons with disabilities. However, there has been no action on drafting or implementing laws to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Bermuda. Additionally, to date, Bermuda has not signed on or ratified the UN CRPD.

Researcher-Subject Relations

The research questions and approach to examining these perspectives was shaped by the author's direct experiences[28] with the Paralympic movement as an athlete and advocate. The author served in a dual role; in addition to being the lead researcher, she was a Paralympic athlete who competed in the 2008 and 2012 Games. She also had a history of

being involved with disability outreach efforts in these two countries, which opened the door for this study to take place. In some cases, the author had formed previous personal relationships with some of the athletes, coaches, programme administrators and parents. Because of these existing relationships, rapport was already established with participants as well as some level of shared knowledge of the development of para-sport in these nations. Parents, coaches and administrators encouraged the author to document the evolution of and impact of para-sport in these countries. All participants were read an assent statement to gain their verbal consent for participation.

Specifically related to the data collection, the author was sensitive to the fact that participants perceived her as an athlete and therefore might have been reluctant to share their true feelings. However, the author found the opposite was true because participants were able to see her as who she was and realize that that common bond contributed to trustworthiness and respect. During her research, the author never hid the fact that she was an athlete, and a person with a disability. Though, the author did try to make sure that participants knew that she would not judge them based on their answers and that any existing friendships would not be jeopardized because of this study. It is also true that given her identity as an athlete with a disability this allowed her to gain quicker access to this population. The author did not have to build up a rapport with participants in the same way as if she was a total outsider.

While interviewing participants, the author made sure to inform participants that she would not judge them based on their answers and that responses would be kept confidential and not impact existing relationships. The study was designed to document their stories, within their culture. The author was cognizant of her own culture and the fact that she was entering somewhere new and first had to learn the values and norms. To the author, it was important to empower individuals to develop their voice and for them to advocate for change. Her role was to support ongoing efforts related to para-sport development and help share the stories of what was happening in these two countries, not to come in and change what was happening.

Data Analysis

Analysis was performed using Moustakas'[51] modified van Kaam approach. The process began with creating textural-structural descriptions for each transcript by grouping, reducing, clustering, and identifying themes. These resulting descriptions summarized participants' experiences with

Paralympic sport. A synthesis was created from the meanings and essences of the individuals' experiences with Paralympic sport that represented the group as a whole--- including the different viewpoints of the athletes, parents, coaches and programme coordinators. This interpretive analysis was an iterative and inductive process of decontextualization and recontextualization.[52] The process of decontextualization involved coding specific statements from the transcripts and then grouping them by theme leading to a recontextualization through this new lens.

The first step involved initial or open coding by reviewing all thirteen transcripts to identify key themes. In this stage, the researcher made analytic decisions and coded the data accordingly. In conjunction with the initial coding, the researcher wrote memos that allowed for elaboration on the processes defined in the initial coding stage. The process of memo writing helped to clarify emergent categories, elaborate their conditions and consequences, and situate them within broader social contexts.

Next, the researcher took a period of time away from the data and later revisited the initial codes and memos that had been generated for the transcripts. During this period, the 7 initial codes that had been identified were collapsed into three core categories (or what Charmaz[53] calls focused codes). The core categories, or focused codes were: (1) perception of self, (2) perceptions of disability and (3) civic responsibility. Once core categories were established, the author went back to the transcript data and memos to ensure that they had adequately captured all relevant concepts, to reassess the core categories. The process of identifying the next layer of codes was repeated following the same procedures, which led to the development of the subthemes. This process of coding and subsequently generating memos about the classification of the categories contributed to the overall credibility of the study. There are multiple ways to establish validity in qualitative research, such as through transcript analysis and having convergence of these data across transcripts, memos, archival media files and field notes. Reliability in qualitative work such as this is often synonymous with dependability.[53] With the trust the researcher had with the participants as described in the researcher-subject relations section, the resulting data is believed to be reliable and dependable. Additionally, reliability of themes also came about by considering perspectives from different individuals such as athletes, parents and coaches/administrators.

These resulting descriptions summarized participants' experiences with Paralympic sport. A synthesis was created

using the interviewees' statements of their experiences with sport and how they felt these experiences shaped their identity and their surrounding environments. The researcher recontextualized the preliminary themes and presented them to the participants as a form of member checking to determine their agreement with interpretations. Their feedback was incorporated and themes were finalized. This process contributed to the credibility of the study and validity of these data.

Results

Both countries, Bermuda and Ghana, have barriers that affect persons with disabilities' perceptions of self worth and quality of life. However, these results indicate that participation in Paralympic sport has benefits. Results are organized by three broad themes: 1) changes in one's own perception of self, 2) benefits to other's perceptions of disability as well as, 3) instilling a sense of civic responsibility to continue educating others. Within each broad theme, subthemes are identified and quotes from athletes, parents, programme coordinators and coaches from both countries are provided. Table 1 provides a listing of all participants (pseudonyms), their country and role. Some individuals take issue with Paralympians being referred to as athletes with disabilities and claim they are simply athletes. While this is a hotly debated topic, all athletes who participated in this study (n=7) did self-identify as a person with a disability.

Changes in One's Own Perception of Self

Individuals with disabilities go through a process of social and psychosocial disability identity development.[33] One of the initial components is that of acceptance followed by the relationship phase of "meeting others like you" to learn the ways of the group. Given the fluid nature of these phases, certain experiences such as participating in sport provide insight into one's own perception of self and one's disability identity. Constructivism suggests that individuals make meaning through experiences and these experiences are governed by social and cultural influences.[54] As adults have a greater repertoire of life experiences, they have a deeper foundation from which to interpret new learning through the process of critical thinking, reasoning and reflection. These processes, grounded in constructivism, contribute to altering one's perception of self.

Internalized Identity Changes

Jane (Bermuda) describes a sense of belonging she felt and

relief to know she was not alone. Exposure to sport helped Jane synthesize her identity, "You know, [sport] gave me a sense of identity and really brought out who I am." For these individuals, participating in sport allowed them to excel in something despite having a disability. Coujoe (Ghana), a cyclist, explains. "I am confident now. I want to change people perceptions about people with physical disabilities. The talent I have is one of the tools that I have; [I] can do that."

Abeeku [Ghana] shared a short and powerful statement after competing in her first Paralympic Games. She commented, "Now my family talks to me." Abeeku had long been excluded from her family, but her exposure to sport led to success, which changed everything. As a national medalist, her family began to recognize and value her accomplishments and in fact, she became the primary breadwinner. Antobam (Ghana), an athlete shared "We've passed through obstacles and made it. I have changed; I am stronger. Through this, we are changing the perceptions of persons with disabilities in Ghana." Coach Amy (Ghana) also shared an emotional response, "The day that [the athletes] qualified was probably the best day of my life, I was in tears. They pulled out the best times they've ever raced in their life." This coaching relationship was also recognized by the athletes such as Tano (Ghana),

She has been a strong lady coach. We are so proud of her. We are so happy to have her by our side and... so grateful to her for helping us bring [out] our best within us..

Outward Expressions of Abilities

Growing up in Ghana, Mensah (Ghana) developed a fear of being around people. Friends did not want to come close to him for fear of "catching" his disability. He explained, "Because of the way they treated me, I never even liked to go close to where people are. But sports has really changed my life, in the sense that I did not know how to speak in public before." Now, Mensah regularly appears on a television show, *The Capabilities of Disabled People* where he proudly encourages others to be more embracing and accepting of those with disabilities. In Ghanian culture, family or community gatherings are referred to as meetings. Tano explained how his own awareness developed a realization:

"Every Saturday [went] to a meeting, they say they are going to meet, and it's something about persons with disabilities. So a friend invited me to that meeting...From there I said okay, it's cool, maybe I should talk to them. . .

The coolest bit of it was like, oh, it's not me alone, me as a disabled person in this world."

Amir (Ghana) echoed:

My voice and the other athletes, when we speak on radio and on TV our voices are heard. We are the voice for the voiceless. Aside, people are now valuing us people are now giving us that respect, pointing their hands saying that this guy is a star, you are a star, keep it up.

Now viewed in a positive light, these individuals developed a disability identity and a refined sense of self.

Benefits to Others Perception of Disability

Interviewees had more opportunities to engage with their community as well as with local, national and international media. These outlets have contributed to changing broader perceptions of what athletes with disabilities are capable of in disability sport and beyond. Aligned with social cognitive learning theory,[54] individuals' perception of disability changed through observation and experience with athletes with disabilities.

Sport-specific changes in perceptions of athletes with disabilities

A parent (Bermuda) explained that throughout her daughter's Paralympic journey, she works to raise awareness and draw attention to government officials about the lack of accessibility. She described the tremendous need to educate others and to,

Raise the awareness that these are legit sporting events. I think a lot of the time people think 'oh bless them' and they don't understand that they really train hard. They train just like the able bodies do. Part of our mission is to change that perception.

A programme coordinator [Bermuda] shared her change in perspective,

Over the past few years, my mind has been revolutionised regarding sport. Sport to me in recent years it means freedom, expression, inclusivity, embracing that I-can [attitude], it's taken on a whole meaning because of working with persons with disabilities.

This last example touches on both sport-specific changes in perceptions and broader ones, which is the next sub-theme

of this category. As Jane (Bermuda) recalled poignantly:

I actually had an experience when I was home the last time, and I was training on the track and this man came around to me and said, 'Can I talk to you?' I said, 'Yeah sure.' and he said, 'I saw you a long time ago training here at the track when you were here, and not in Canada at school' and he was saying 'I never thought you would be anyone or go anywhere with this sport you have definitely changed my mind.' So it was pretty cool to know that someone thought that I couldn't, and then when I did, he was like wow. I was in shock. I just said 'thank you, that's a huge compliment.'

I think just that a lot of people are starting to realize now that [people with disabilities] can do things, and we can achieve anything and we work hard. I just really hope that I inspire a lot of other people in Bermuda to do that.

Recognition of Broader Non-Athletic Capabilities

Mensah (Ghana) used sports to change others perceptions of what he was capable of beyond athletics:

Sports has made me active, very strong, contribute[d] to my society, brought respect to me, help[ed] me to now encourage people in life…I use this medium to encourage the public about the perception they have about disabled people. To encourage those on the street begging for alms, to tell our mothers who are keeping their children with physical deformity inside to bring them out in the open. I use myself as an example to them. Disability is how they make their mind.

Tano (Ghana) echoed:

Sports have helped a lot because now in Ghana people call themselves friends of disabled [people]. There was a perception of getting close to a disabled person if you yourself [aren't] a disabled person or giving birth, your children can be disabled. . . people believe because Ghana believes in so many traditions and religion, so they believe in so many things.

Now people are allowing their sons and daughters to marry disabled people. At first it was not like that, because people think if you marry a disabled boy or girl that you're going to give birth to a disabled child. So now people are saying that's not true…People are believing that, okay, giving support to this person, they can do this, they can do this. So all these things are changing. That's great for sport development. It's great for people with disabilities in my country.

In the relatively short period of time from when I started working with athletes from these countries, (since 2003 in Ghana and 2009 in Bermuda), until after the London 2012 Games, there have been changes in perceptions of disability by others that the participants felt, saw and experienced that became apparent through these quotes. Though, participants also recognize there is still a long way to go. Linda, a parent from Bermuda, shared, "Honestly, I don't see it changing much more until someone in government has someone close to them who acquires a disability." The mission of changing others' perception of disability has a deeper layer to it---a sense of civic responsibility---which is the last theme.

Sense of Civic Responsibility

All interviewees possessed deep pride about their involvement in Paralympic sport. They were keenly aware of the unique position they were in and took this role seriously. These individuals truly had synthesized their disability identity and, as part of their role in disability culture, they strove to educate others.

Desire to give back to own community

A Ghanaian athlete shared, "I really want to make you proud, and my families and also to prove a point in my country and the Government as whole." Similar to the sentiment echoed from Mensah (Ghana) earlier about educating others, Jane (Bermuda) shares,

I hope to have a lot more athletes competing, and not even at that level, if they don't want to be at that level, that's fine. I just want to get people out there doing something! I just want to get people out there and get awareness out to Bermuda, we can do these things. There's a lot of people with disabilities in Bermuda, but you don't see them. I think part of it is their family, they're not aware of what is available to them, or they find it easier to just put them in front of the TV instead of actually going out there and doing something with them. But again, I think it's about awareness as well, and just knowing that there is support out there.

These athletes have tremendous dedication to their country and commitment to develop sport for others. Tano (Ghana) from Ghana shares:

Being the flag bearer of my country, being here [the Paralympic Games] for almost 5 million population disabled back home in Ghana, about almost 500 sportsmen and women back home in Ghana, carry[ing] that flag . . .

...I feel so, so proud, and it's so, so, so unique. . . I want to take it upon myself to grow up a new future class of new sportsmen.

Mensah acquired his disability at age 9 due to an accident described below:

I became physically challenged on my legs due to the negligence and greediness of my biological mother. She had wanted to kill my dad for blood money, as a result [she] poured ritual medicine at the entrance of the doorstep for my Dad to step in it. Unfortunately for me, I step[ped] in it at the age of nine years, I became paralyze[d] and could not walk again, this is why I became physically challenged on my legs.

Mensah went on to explain:

I did this trapping of fish and hunting of animals to survive…One thing I realized in me was that even [in] those time[s] I never [gave] up because I was trying to do something to support myself. Life was not easy, but with effort, I am now an asset in my family. God has seen me through up till now. I will say both have helped, but the sports [are] the ultimate. My performance in the qualifiers in Ghana told my leaders that I could make Ghana proud. The rejected stone has now become the corner stone.

Jane (Bermuda) uses sport as an advocacy platform to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in Bermuda. She believes, as a whole, that her country is not very proactive when it comes to thinking about disability; she says, "Bermuda is not really looking forward to people with a disability, we're trying to change it and I just want to show Bermudians what people with a disability can achieve." When asked what she would change about Bermuda, she said it would be accessibility and, "It would also be getting everyone to treat us as equal as anybody else." Even coaches recognized the larger picture, Coach Kip from Bermuda said, "It is our dream to lay some seeds for the up and coming children with disabilities and we believe the journey is not ending in London 2012." However, despite the strong desire to be civically engaged, it is difficult to bring about social change. As John (Ghana) explained,

I'm not going to pretend that [having athletes competing at the 2012 Paralympics] had a seismic effect or impact. I think it has had some positive impact that can lead to more. Certainly, and particularly where Amir and Tano, they have

gone on to achieve a bigger status within Ghana and society.

Challenges of the Spotlight

There are also pressures associated with trying to change perceptions while being in the spotlight. Jane explained her situation as a Bermudian with national and international recognition, "Sometimes I feel pressure being a pioneer. Just going into competition or anything knowing that the whole country is on my shoulders." Coach Amy (Ghana) also discussed about how oftentimes she and her athletes were not taken seriously or held to very high expectations. She explained,

I was meeting with the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) recently; they told us that it's really unheard of in sub-Saharan Africa to have 4 athletes qualifying out of right.[1] So it's a pretty significant achievement for us as well.

Tim [Ghana], the CEO for the organisation that pledged the support for the Ghanaians as they went to London 2012, went on to say,

All four of our guys qualified by right for London 2012, which is fantastic, and what we are trying to do is show that the Paralympic movement needs to focus more on Africa. A huge proportion of people with a disability come from Africa, yet their representation at the Paralympics is fairly limited. So we wanted to try and announce Africa in the space a bit more.

Coach Amy explained that one of the challenges facing many athletes in Africa is the scarcity of resources and facilities to support high performance athletes in comparison to elsewhere.

We haven't had the same facilities as everyone else. We had to drive three hours to get to a track at half past five in the morning so it's been a lot of dedication to get to this point. It's just the most amazing thing to know that we've conquered it and done it. In Ghana, it was difficult... the track isn't like what we've got [in the UK]. So one of the main reasons for us coming back here was to be able to use the facilities and a better gym and get [the athletes] used to the English climate as well.

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[1]As opposed to qualifying via wildcard. This means that the athletes met mean qualifying standards and followed procedural guidelines and had an established National Paralympic Committee and were able to represent their country by right.

Sports programme coordinator, John, explained how the lack of funding and resources meant that Tim's organisation made a commitment to the athletes in Ghana to minimize their burdens by:

Finding the equipment, financially supporting their families, so that they were focusing 100 percent on their training and giving them crucially the access to those competitions that would enable them not only to better themselves and develop but also crucial to get those qualifying times, so that when they got to the Games they knew they were there in their own right and they weren't just there as a token.

Becoming a role model for others

All of the athletes we spoke to were keenly aware of the impact they were having on others. Becoming and being a role model for others was on the forefront of their minds, and on the minds of coaches and parents. Tano (Ghana) elaborates:

When I arrived in London, I never knew people outside of my immediate family have recognized and cherished what I'm doing as a career. Now when you go to Ghana...there is news, they talk of Tano they talk of the Ghanaian Paralympians. We are celebrities. The message we are sharing, we are spreading around the world is unique...

Some of our parents and grandparents back in Africa did not pay much attention to what is going on in the world, have ignored TV and radio, and are not well-informed. They have stuck to what they believed in the past — that a disabled person in the family must be a grandfather's curse, or this person must have done something wrong and that has what has caused them to be like this. Our team of four elite and disabled sportspeople of Ghana, [at the London 2012] Games have taken it upon ourselves to change perception, and change people's minds about disability.

Linda (parent-coach) [Bermuda] reflects:

Jane is definitely an inspiration and a role model – not just here in Bermuda, but worldwide. Watching Jane compete at the Paralympics was a great inspiration to all of us. Not everyone has Jane's talent and drive, but it is important for people to see what they can aspire to. Jane provides that for everybody, not just for people who come to [our organisation]. For some of our participants finding the motivation to get out of bed can be a challenge. If they can see what Jane has achieved, it can sometimes help them to get through their front door and take those first steps

towards participating in something like our adaptive sports programme.

Amir [Ghana] explained the impact of athlete successes at the first African Amputee Football Cup of Nations held in Ghana. "The first time Ghana organized the Cup of the Nations 2011, my fellow disabled athlete colleagues, the number [of] anticipated [athletes with disabilities] was [underestimated]. They had seen my story. Okay if this guy is able to do this, then I am able to do it."

John (Ghana), sports programme coordinator elaborated that the athletes had an impact beyond the sports themselves:

Just to backtrack a moment, it wasn't just about getting those four to the games, it was about their character and what they could do if we got them to that stage. We wanted them effectively to be role models and to champion disability sport and bring it and put it on the table as an initiative, I mean to be discussed in Ghana and at government level and everywhere else. And I think that's where we did have an impact. Amir has been a vociferous supporter of disability sport and disability rights, equality and so on ever since the games. He's starting his own charity. He is leading clinics and peaceful demonstrations.

News stories from Jane's home country of Bermuda described her as a role model and her realistic expectations of how she would place at the Games. Jane eloquently reflected on her first Paralympic Games experience:

Yes, it is true that I came last in every race at the London 2012 Paralympics but it is also true that I knew I would. I knew that a medal was beyond my reach at this point. I knew that I did not have the body strength or necessary muscle mass. I knew that I had almost no chance against the older, and more experienced racers. But I also knew that I would put everything I had in to this impossible task because this was the beginning of my future. At 19 and in my first Paralympic Games I was not thinking of the present but planning for the future. I would learn, understand and improve in this cauldron of fire and be ready for Rio in four years time. Now that took courage. To put myself out there on a world stage knowing that expectations at home are so high. That's courage that inspires.

Discussion

From a social ecological framework, participants in this study shared many facets in which their own perceptions of disability and/or of self evolved individually; through

involvement on their team and within their communities and networks. Individuals who participated in sport had an outlet to succeed and were no longer defined by physical limitations. Some disability stigmas are: physical limitation, inability, less than, passive or not as capable. Disability sport, however, is the exact opposite whereby athletes with disabilities are viewed as capable athletes. There are a number of deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes about disability in Ghanaian culture.[28, 48] Involvement in disability sport allows for individuals to push themselves to physical levels that may not have been considered to be in their realm of possibility. Similar to able-bodied athletes striving for athletic excellence in their respective sport; athletes with disabilities being pushed to new heights have the potential to be energizing and engaging. Disability sport provides a way to be determined at working towards something and is empowering. Sport has empowered other minorities from developing nations because it gives individuals something to be good at, a way to be a contributing member to society, and a sense of belonging. For individuals with disabilities, it is no different and perhaps even more meaningful because of the powerful stigmas that get debunked through sport.

Individuals with disabilities in these nations were able to accept their disability because of participation in sport and to begin to learn about broader disability culture and disability rights. Through meeting others like them abroad, they began to make sense of their past experiences of discrimination and prejudice. They developed a disability identity as well as an athlete identity. Forber-Pratt and Aragon[33] describe the importance of developing a disability identity and learning the cultural ways of the group. Instead of living in isolation, meeting other individuals like them allow for this to occur. By associating with a group with shared values and norms, disability takes on a new meaning. It becomes something to be proud of and it opens doors for participation in international sport and provides a platform to educate others. In the cases discussed, exposure to disability sport was the context by which these individuals came together to bond around a common activity, learn about and begin to identify with disability sport culture. This is not to say that individuals with disabilities who are not exposed to sport cannot also identify with disability culture. There was a natural benefit of exposure to sport for these individuals to be able to meet others like them at events; however, there are other trajectories that could yield the same outcome.

Additionally, the intersection of identities must be discussed further. Persons with disabilities have multiple identities, and not just a "disability identity." These participants also

had an athlete identity, which is their cultural identity among others. One's own cultural background greatly influences and informs the experiences shared by the participants. As was noted in Forber-Pratt, Scott and Driscoll's prior study, culture must remain at the core of any new grassroots sport programme.[46] Research by Ostrander[55] examined the intersection of individuals with three multiple identities: masculinity, disability and race. Results from this study came from interviews with eleven men who had spinal cord injuries and identified themselves as an ethnic minority as well. These interviews revealed that the interaction of disability and ethnic identity was not deemed important whereas other theoretical studies have presented the argument that the interaction between disability and one's ethnic identity is important.[56-58]

In the narratives presented here, the intersection of multiple identities of the athletes turned out to be a beautiful thing. One facet of a person's identity drove another and contributed integration of these multiple identities. For example, athletes with disabilities were able to use a strong and healthy sport identity to subsequently develop their disability identity. Due to strong cultural influences about disability, both of these identities could have been left under-developed. However, a mosaic was painted, allowing these interactions to take place. These narratives force us to look past the physicality of disability and to instead view disability as a component of one's identity similar to being a woman, being of African American descent or growing up with low socioeconomic status is a component of those able-bodied athletes' identities.

Athletes described how disability was very much a central and core part of their identity along with being a man or a woman, being from their particular country and, in some cases, being a person of colour. By embracing and textualizing multiple identities, it is empowering for others. Parents, coaches and programme coordinators learned and shared how their athletes with disabilities empowered others. And as Tami Spry[59] eloquently explains,

This will continue to the point where it becomes an everyday critical pedagogy of hope and transformation. It becomes a practice of vulnerably engaging the collisions and communions with others as we seek to find ways of living that allow for a diversity of being, a multiplicity of stories.

This is precisely the type of cultural engagement needed to allow sport to drive social change.

Bystanders also changed their perceptions of disability. In

these nations with an emerging disability culture, there oftentimes are little to no protections for the rights of persons with disabilities, as was discussed earlier. Though, drawing positive attention to disability is beneficial to potentially change the climate of disability. For example, as policymakers and government officials became aware that there were athletes with disabilities who were ambassadors to their home country, they seemed to express more interest in supporting the needs of persons with disabilities in their areas (i.e., education, healthcare, legislation).[28] Leaders from mainstream sport organisations began to advocate for the inclusion of athletes with disabilities in their programming. In Bermuda, athletes with disabilities were invited to participate in their international road race weekend and included in a large women's sports exhibition. A well-known nonprofit organisation in Ghana that provides sport coaching, education and leadership experiences to underprivileged young talent in Africa now include athletes with disabilities. All interviewees shared a devotion to a greater cause. While athletes worked hard within their respective sports, they realized a responsibility to give back to others, which seemed inherent. The athletes were receiving some support from sponsors and other organizations, and there were no direct stipulations on athlete engagement in return for funding.

Interviewees realized their unique platform to be able to draw attention and advance the rights of persons with disabilities in their country. This is not to suggest that athletes from resource rich nations do not do the same. This aspect of empowerment was particularly strong and meaningful. This presents a new dimension to the sociology of sport where we know there is value in inserting voices of the marginalized culture into public discussions and debates.[60] To date, there are no laws protecting the civil rights of persons with disabilities in Bermuda. It is not to say that Paralympic athletes are not empowered in more developed nations, and do strive to make a difference for others too. Rather, in these nations the stereotypes surrounding disability prevail and there are not the same opportunities to obtain an education or employment. In these cases, their involvement in sport has the potential to be life changing. For these athletes to be involved in sport, they give hope to others by showing what is possible.

It seems that the mindset of these athletes is different than elite Paralympic athletes from more developed countries; they recognize that they are pioneers and have the potential to make a difference on very large scales in their respective countries. It is hypothesized that sport psychologists would need to work differently with these athletes to build on their

dedication to sport "for the greater good" to leverage that for their competitions, but also balance not placing too much burden on one's self to perform. As with any athlete there are risks of burn out, but the additional layer for these athletes is also the feeling of loneliness of having to be a pioneer and also being bombarded by media appearances and requests. These competing demands are something that Ryba and Kashope-Wright[61] explained perpetuate the need for sports psychologists to develop strategies for effective balance.

Exposure to sport and participation at the highest level does not come without a darker side. These elements did not come out explicitly in the discussions provided, but we know that viewing sport through a cultural lens lends itself to examine power dynamics.[62] One of the concerns with any sport work in a nation with a newly emerging programme that came about through the author's fieldwork experiences, is fear that individuals are buying into the programme for selfish reasons, or for personal exposure without careful consideration of the needs of the athletes and coaches. This fear of exploitation from sponsors, donors, organisations and government is a tricky balance because these individuals also play a vital role in these athletes' success and exposure to disability sport.

It is also easy to become absorbed in the spotlight of sport and neglect the adaption challenges these individuals may be facing such as being surrounded by a completely different languages, cultures and differing values when traveling overseas. Schinke explains that culture-specific investigations, such as this one, are able to highlight the adaptation challenges experienced by those from marginalized cultures having to adapt to mainstream culture. It is imperative to provide athletes, parents and coaches with the opportunity to discuss and process these cultural shocks and adaption challenges faced.

Lastly, these athletes were competing with a greater purpose. Oftentimes, athletes at elite level competition are focused on the medals and rankings. This is not to suggest that these athletes were not striving to do their best, however, their end goal was much broader—they were also competing to make a social justice statement. Fisher and colleagues remind us that "sport is not simply entertainment, but a contested terrain where larger social struggles are played out and social injustices can be either challenged or reinforced." These individuals were drawing attention to social injustices from their home countries, but also pushing the international world of sport to consider important issues regarding access to sport and equality in

terms of training equipment, coaching resources and the like. The Ghanaian coach spoke about the inequalities between facilities at home versus abroad, and likewise, Jane from Bermuda left her home community to train in another country to be able to have access to greater resources and expertise. These individuals who had the opportunity to train overseas had the means to do so from organisations' monetary and coaching support, sponsorship and personal dedication; but this would not be true for every aspiring athlete. Additionally, as is true with many sponsorship relationships, there were likely expectations on these athletes related to how to be portrayed in the public eye, and a sense of civic engagement may have been a portion of their agreement. However, it is believed that these athletes understood their greater purpose to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in their home country through this engagement in sport. Additionally, for these interviewees, they were exposed to a larger disability sport community on their journey. They chose to bring this knowledge and integrate these shared values back to their country to challenge stereotypes. There was a tremendous amount of pride and excitement the participants shared about seeing themselves as a part of a larger disability sport world and being capable of supporting social change.

Conclusion

Despite the small number of participants, these narratives provide evidence that disability sport can be used as a vehicle for social change as was seen in the reflections and commentary provided about changing perceptions of disability. In addition to shaping their own perceptions of their disability, sport for persons with disabilities in nations with an emerging disability culture piques curiosity from others. Intrigued by seeing something new for the first time, community members, policymakers and leaders took an interest in disability and disability-related issues in these countries. The spectacle of sport draws the attention of others. Granted, in both of these situations, competing at the highest level, representing one's nation at the Paralympic Games, also draws media attention. This attention was leveraged for orchestrating social change in these nations; through the telling of these athletes' stories in news stories and TV media coverage, which led to more conversations about larger disability issues and access. Athletes with disabilities, parents, coaches and programme coordinators from nations with emerging disability awareness are committed to activism to improve lives of others. Participation in Paralympic sport provided an avenue for athletes with disabilities from these countries to integrate their multiple identities as contributing members of their

disability sport communities and ultimately to become leaders. The disability sport movement is an undervalued asset particularly to countries striving for equality among their citizens.

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Original Research

Rio 2016 and disability: An analysis of the sport-for-development discourse and the legacies for disabled people

Leonardo Mataruna[1], Thiago Melo[2], Daniel Range[1], Andressa Guimaraes[2]

[1] Coventry University, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relation, UK
[2] Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and Coventry University (Carnival Project), Brazil

Corresponding author email: mataruna@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper investigates how the legacy of the 2016 Paralympic Games, in Rio de Janeiro, has been discussed on the Facebook page 'Cidade Olímpica.' The City Council of Rio De Janeiro manages this page, which uses the Sport-For-Development discourse in order to disclose information about projects that are being developed in the city, and to justify the investments that are made with public money. Furthermore, the main objective of this paper is to identify whether the Sport-For-Development discourse has been used to discuss the legacies for disabled people. This study was developed during the 2014 FIFA World Cup because it was during that period that the Brazilian government released details of some of the main projects for the Olympics and then presented the great planned impacts of these legacies. The season of that mega event was important for the country in order to promote Brazil as a strong brand for tourism and sport for development. Consequentially, this period represented an opportunity to address the Paralympic legacy topic, similar to the entire legacy of the Games and their impacts on society.

Introduction

The Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 have widely been seen as a great development opportunity for Brazil.[1] In preparation for the Games, the country has had to plan several interventions to expand and improve the urban infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro. According to Rio2016 the staging of the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games marks the arrival of the biggest sporting event on the planet into new territory with it being the first time in history that the competitions will be held in South America. "In the unique and privileged setting of Rio de Janeiro, a historical edition of the Games is expected, with the participation of about 15 thousand athletes from more than 200 countries."[1]

Investments for the Olympic and Paralympic Games come to at least £8 billion, of which 43% is public money.[2] To illustrate what fraction of this money has been committed to legacy expenses, the cost of the stadium is estimated to be R$ 6.6 billion whilst the legacy expenses run at an estimated R$ 24.6 billion.[2] Evans[3] reminds us of 'the new ruins of Athens: rusting and decaying 10 years on, how Greece's Olympics turned into a £7 billion white elephant.' Worries around a lack of legacy similar to what was seen after the Rio 2007 Pan Am Games[4] and large expense incurred during times of economic uncertainty have caused a great deal of debate in Brazilian society.

The promise of economic, urban and social development is a justification used by the government for these costs.[5] As stated in Rio 2016's bid, this plan forms part of the Brazilian Government's vision to invest in sport as a catalyst for social integration through four main programs: "social inclusion through sport and leisure; elite sport; expansion of sports infrastructure; and hosting major sports events."[1]

A sporting mega event is capable of stimulating various sectors of the host country and can provide economic stimulus. Raeder[6] mentioned that in Beijing 2008, London 2012 and even the Rio 2007 PanAm Games investments,

mainly from the public purse, were calculated on the scale of billions of dollars. Therefore, concerns about the investments made in a host city or country can often exceed the enthusiasm bought by potential economic benefits. According to Lo Bianco[7] the "legacy plan," which can be amongst other things, regional or national, an improvement in transport infrastructure, empowerment of the national identity or 'social welfare' can have a major impact on whether or not a city is awarded the right to host a mega event.[8]

As Chalip[9] points out, events are typically measured and evaluated on their impacts, whether they are social, environmental or economic. However, investment in mega event legacy and impacts is often guided by political agendas and necessities. By analysing this context, the Sport-For-Development discourse has been used to construct a justification for bidding for mega events and to gain public support for doing so. According to Coakley and Souza,[10] this discourse is a political tool now widely used by countries seeking to host major sporting events. In developing countries such as Brazil, this discourse may be even more latent, as higher than typical spending will be needed to improve urban infrastructure and build sports facilities.

This idea of generating legacy through the events raises the question about the specific legacy of the Paralympic Games, since the high investment made for the Games should benefit the entire population, including people with disabilities. According to Misener et al,[11] the discourse of governments usually generalizes the discussion of the legacy of the Games without separately discussing the legacies of the Olympics and the legacies of the Paralympics. Despite specific legacy plans for the promotion of accessibility, there is little discussion in wider society about these.[12]

Accessibility is one of the main objectives of the legacy plan of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio. The investments not only focus on the venue facilities during the Games, but 'encompassing the public transport system, the city's hotels and main tourist attractions.'[11] Amongst the planned legacy is improving the accessibility of urban infrastructure, ensuring accessibility to the Olympic and Paralympic facilities, the development of sports facilities for people with disabilities, a positive change of perception in relation to their abilities, and increased self-esteem and opportunities for people with disabilities.

As such, the legacy plan intends to renovate and adapt sports facilities across Brazil in order to incorporate these venues into the legacy of the Paralympic Games in 2016 and spread the practice of sports for people with disabilities all over the country. Through these legacy plan objectives, the government is looking to integrate disabled people by providing a better urban infrastructure and increased opportunities for mobility. There is also an overt aim of increasing physical activity among these citizens.

From these frameworks, this paper aims to identify how the discourse of Sport-For- Development highlights the legacies of the Paralympic Games in 2016, if at all. Moreover, before the empirical study, we present a literature review on Sport-For- Development and on the Paralympic legacy in order to understand how the discourse should address these impacts. We then address the empirical study of the 'Cidade Olímpica' on Facebook. This page is managed by the City Council of Rio de Janeiro, in order to disseminate information about the projects that are being developed in the city for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016.

Through analysis carried out in June and July 2014, during the FIFA 2014 World Cup in Brazil, this paper seeks to identify how the Paralympic legacy was presented on the 'Cidade Olímpica' page. It starts by making use of the Sport-For-Development discourse to highlight the positive impacts of the Games in the city. This is done intentionally to build public support for the Games. It is also understood that the channel should be a space for the dissemination of Paralympic legacy, and it could potentially be a useful channel for raising awareness of disability.

The construction of the discourse of the "Sport-For-Development"

The realization of hosting a sporting mega-event is linked to a series of investments that the host countries and cities undertake in order to meet the requirements and standards decreed by the organizing and awarding bodies of these events. Expansion or creation of transport infrastructure, stadia and training centres are among other projects and construction schemes covered by often robust budgets provided by the host governments to ensure that organizing and awarding body requirements are met.[13]

Getz,[14] referring to mega events in general, points out that there is a close relationship between politics and the realization of an event. It is from the political interests that the planning and execution of events will be moulded. Furthermore, politicians fund the events with public money

and oversee the regulation of activities around the event, and thus increasingly are capable of bringing their influence to the event.

From the author's perspective, mega events are created, hosted and sold for strategic reasons that include economic, social and cultural aspects. The administration of the legacy should be planned and managed in a positive way; the legacy board has a great tradition and is managed by the International Olympic Committee.[15] These aspects are even more valuable because of the income that is generated from them. There are impacts that can offer legacies for citizens, but the often vested interests of the political sphere cannot be forgotten and can 'often be minimised in order to not compromise the event.[16]

In an outlook specific to sporting mega-events, Horne[17] considers that these events are central and strategic elements in modern capitalist societies. By hosting mega- events, countries seek international recognition and therefore sporting mega-events constitute a "central element" in societies. To Roche,[18] mega-events must be thought of as large-scale cultural events that have popular appeal and media across practically the entire world.

Horne[16] points out two major defining characteristics of contemporary mega- events. The first is related to the social, political and economic benefits that are to be paid to the city or the host country. The second characteristic is related to opportunities that the great media appeal of event offers through coverage of the event before, during and after its completion.

In this context, we see how governments can begin to justify the investments made from the public budget and which garner popular support, with the entire event happening whilst the public are often unaware of the true legacy that a certain event will leave a country.[12] According to Coakley and Souza,[9] history shows that the legacy reflects the interests of capital and that the benefits are enjoyed mainly, if not exclusively, by interests such as powerful businesses by some political leaders and by the organizations that run high-performance sport.

Among the discourses identified in the context of the sporting mega-events, we found "Sport-For-Development." This discourse seeks to justify the appropriation of the "public good," which is then used for national and urban development for promoting new infrastructure and attracting capital and tourism to cities and countries that will host sporting mega-events.[19,9] As Matheson and Baade[12] verified,

the substantial economic impact that the event can guarantee provides a justification for the use of public subsidies. That is, the development discourse presents expenditures as investments that will generate positive economic returns, and also in many cases, urban improvements and a better quality of life for the population after the event.

In developing countries, the discourse of "Sport-For-Development" is very popular. This is due to the costs that these countries have to meet to satisfy the requirements and standards set by the organizing and awarding committees of events. In general, these countries will require more investment and improvements compared to a developed country,[12] With these larger sums the justification for the use of public money should be more robust.

According to Coakley and Souza,[9] although most research on this topic has focused on Northern Hemisphere nations, the results of their research do have important implications for cities and nations in the Southern Hemisphere. In these countries, sporting mega-events are increasingly seen as vehicles for obtaining political power and reputation in both national and international relations, including the opening of a relationship channel with countries of the "first world." All of this goes hand in hand with the social, economic and political developments that take place in that society that hosts the mega event as a result of their hosting.[9,20,21,22]

"Sport-For-Development" is further reinforced when the possibility or certainty of hosting a sport mega event creates an "emotional community."[9] Often this is most visible through an increase in patriotism or national pride. The rhetoric of development is thus accepted because the thought of hosting a major event helps make local people feel represented in the global context. The euphoria that is associated with the possibility of using the event as a platform to expose the culture of the country to the rest of the world in a positive light is then used to counteract the critics of the event. Criticism in the Southern Hemisphere calls into question the investments needed to host the mega-event and is classified as "cynical" and "afraid" of working towards a better future.[9]

Waitt[23] noted that in the Sydney Olympics, the Australian community support (referred to as "civic boosterism") was convened to create a positive image of the event and to decrease or negate the negative reviews. While the 2000 Olympic Games were used to reposition Sydney in the global context, they were also sold to the population through a dialogue that explored the Olympic symbolism

and rhetoric, and the promise of great social and sporting legacies.

Discourse analysis of "Sport-For-Development" also reveals the intention of securing public approval for investments. Here, the dialogue proves to be even more of a policy tool. An example of this is the creation of the emotional "communities" cited by Coakley and Souza.[9] This discourse in developing countries has populist connotations that are often manipulated for political gain. These are political interests which are not restricted to the economic advantages that the sporting mega-event can bring. In the construction of the discourse of "Sport-For-Development," the media plays a fundamental role in spreading the message. But now, with wider access to social media and the Internet, the governments increasingly assume the role of creating narratives.[24] Thus, not only can they present the legacies, but also they can discuss disability in order to influence public perception around this strand of the legacy. This is pertinent to the legacy plan of the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Paralympics and its legacy

The legacy of the Paralympic Games is usually related to the legacy of the Olympic Games.[25] However, some scholars point out that there are specific outcomes that need to be considered. Landry[26] highlights the Paralympic Games as an opportunity to develop awareness about disabled people and also their integration in all fields of society, including sport. Integrating disabled people into wider community life also means providing the necessary infrastructure in order to ensure their mobility and to protect their rights.

By investigating the preparation for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Weed and Dowse[27] have found that less was discussed about the Paralympic legacies compared with those of the Olympics. Public debate covered in the media and announcements made by government were mostly related to the legacy of the Olympics in general. "In this climate, opportunities relating to the Paralympic Games, perhaps because they are perceived to have less economic potential, have only rarely been discussed."[26]

The authors highlight that, just like the Olympic Games, the Paralympics can offer opportunities to promote culture, health, sport and community and social wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of disabled people in all aspects of their lives. Besides this, the Paralympics can change public perceptions of disability by enhancing positive attitudes towards disability and disabled people.

The Paralympics, in this perspective, is, according to Weed and Dowse[26] "a significant national project in the global spotlight," which provides "an important social vehicle" to promote social changes for disabled people. These changes would occur with regard to attitudinal, economic, social, political and environmental barriers that have been seen to limit the role of disabled people in society. "As with the Olympic Games, opportunities exist for the Paralympic Games to take advantage of social, media and political attention to drive changes in attitudes and provision."

Weed and Dowse[26] also draw attention to the fact that the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) attempted to adopt an inclusive approach by referring to either "the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games," or simply "the 2012 Games." This latter nomenclature used by LOCOG can lead to the Paralympic Games becoming invisible, or to foster the belief that legacy planning would refer to both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, "when, in fact, it has been planned with only the Olympic Games in mind." As argued by Mataruna- Dos-Santos,[28] Brittain,[29] Legg and Steadward,[30] Dickson, Benson and Blackman,[31] Heisey,[32] since the 1988 Seoul Games and the 1992 Albertville Games, the Olympics and the Paralympics have taken place in the same year and in the same city, and therefore carry a shared social legacy. These authors reported that some facilities were in the same (in the case of Seoul and London) or different venues (Sydney and Beijing). In fact, the 1988 Games was the first time that the Olympic Organizing Committee had a Paralympic Games Department.[33] The Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games were in the same bid to host both events, however, the London 2012 events were the first to propose joint legacies.[27,32,4]

However, during the preparations for London 2012 there was a tendency for policymakers and politicians to relate almost solely to legacies regarding sporting development. This led Weed and Dowse[26] to observe that "not only is this approach disingenuous, but it implies that there are no specific opportunities for the advancement of social wellbeing offered by the Paralympic Games other than those related to the development of disability sport."

By looking at Sydney 2000, Darcy[34] observed that the development of Paralympic sport was a priority for the policymakers and suggested that disabled communities were not best served by these legacies and the initiatives proposed.

Misener, Darcy, Legg and Gilbert,[10] pointed out four components presented by the International Paralympic Committee as important planning activities and legacies of the hosting experience. These components are: "1) Accessible infrastructure in sport facilities and in the overall urban development; 2) Development of sport structures / organizations for people with disability, from grass-roots to elite level; 3) Attitudinal changes in the perception of the position and the capabilities of persons with a disability as well as in the self-esteem of the people with disability; 4) Opportunities for people with a disability to become fully integrated in social living and to reach their full potential in aspects of life beyond sports."

According to Misener, Darcy, Legg and Gilbert,[10] infrastructure is one of the main legacies of hosting a mega-event, specifically new facilities for sports, housing and transportation. Although it is an important element for any host country, this infrastructure is even more relevant in developing countries, especially when it comes to ensuring accessibility alongside building and upgrading infrastructure to be more accessible to people with disabilities. This can be one of the most important legacies of the Paralympic Games.

In Sydney 2000, for instance, there were plans to integrate accessibility into the venues and surrounding areas, as well as upgrading public transportation networks in order to serve all citizens, including those with disabilities. In Beijing, for the 2008 Paralympic Games, plans were also made to improve accessible facilities with regards to public transportation, accommodation and sporting venues. After 2008, the Chinese host city was equipped with a fully accessible infrastructure, which included 2,835 low-floor buses and many bus stations with pathways featuring raised tiles within sidewalks to mark the way for blind people, as well as ramps and wheelchair waiting areas. Following the examples of previous cities, London also planned and developed a fully accessible infrastructure for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. However, as Misener, Darcy, Legg and Gilbert[10] pointed out, this plan was centralized in the Olympic Village and into the venues of the Games and so the legacy was not shared around the whole city.

According to Dallasta, the Paralympic legacy in Brazil represents an opportunity to enhance the rights of disabled people. Brazil lacks consistent and well-developed policies that ensure accessibility for disabled people. In order to reduce social inequality, the creation of public policies, the effective participatory integration of people with disabilities

in various aspects of social life, and some improvements in the urban infrastructure have all been proposed. "So that these policies benefit people with disabilities, it should be noted, including the relevant legislation of each state, each city in order to examine, in detail, the peculiarities related to each location."[35]

Hylton et al[36] discuss the mutual areas of interest which integrate polices which reduce the social exclusion in the Sport-For-Development perspectives. These include community development, lifelong learning, social cohesion, community safety, active health lifestyles, social and economic regeneration, job creation, equal opportunities, crime prevention, and environmental protection. All of the polices mentioned reinforce the idea that sport cannot and should not be considered in isolation of other aspects of society and should be inclusive to all regardless of an individual's physical, sensorial or mental condition or disability; race; ethnicity; colour; religion; political; gender expression or identity; diversity; ancestry; national or regional origin; sexual orientation; marital status; social status, military or veteran status; age; and ideology.[37,38,39,40,35]

Through empirical analysis, the next topic section will present how the Sport-For- Development discourse highlights or fails to highlight the Paralympic legacy of the Rio 2016 Games.

**Sport-For-Development discourse and Paralympic legacy in Rio 2016**

The 'Cidade Olímpica' Facebook page, (Olympic City, in English) is an official channel for the Rio de Janeiro City Council, which broadcasts the progress of projects and services that are planned for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the city. The study was developed during the 2014 FIFA World Cup, between June 12 and July 13. The period of analysis takes into account the fact that hosting the World Cup placed the country in the international spotlight, and so it is to be believed that the government took this as an opportunity to promote major projects during this period. Thus, this study aims to verify whether the Sport-For-Development discourse has been used to illustrate the legacy of the Olympic Games and particularly the Paralympic Games. In addition, it will judge to what extent the Paralympic legacy has been discussed. As previously observed in the legacy plan for Rio 2016, a key element is to provide an infrastructure for people with disabilities to get around the city as well as ensure access to wider services. It is also clear that this infrastructure must

be in place ahead of the Olympic Games in 2016 as the Olympics take place before the Paralympics. Here it is clear that the discourse of "Sport-For-Development" should address these issues in order to justify the investments made for the whole society and for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Thus, the study on the 'Cidade Olímpica' page was developed using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, which uses content and discourse analysis of weblogs in the manner suggested by Hering et al.[41] We argue that it is possible to identify, qualify and quantify the content of posts on the page and to develop an understanding of both the dynamics of the network and approach of the Brazilian government to disseminating information via social media. In this study the legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games for disabled people and the presentation of legacy is framed by the "Sport-For-Development" discourse. It takes into account the issues discussed and language used, in order to observe how disability is covered on the 'Cidade Olímpica' Facebook page.

The analysis ran during the 2014 World Cup and identified 33 updates on the page. Six main themes were observed, and are shown in the following graph:

Table 1: Updates' Themes
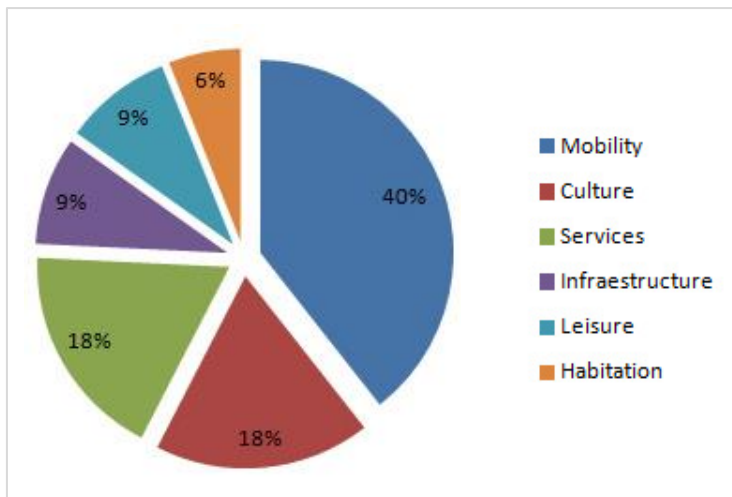
The mobility theme featured heavily with many posts about public transport in the city, and especially an express bus service called Transcarioca (Figure 1). On match days at the Maracana stadium, schedules and itineraries for this were advertised and promoted. In none of these posts was there any information on the accessibility of buses or bus terminals operating along the route.

Figure 1: Post on transportation service during match days in Maracanã

Other posts on mobility were identified; one of them was specifically about a free cable car that was installed in a community called Providencia (Figure 2). According to information from the page itself, at least 10,000 people would benefit from this rapid transit service. But, once again, there was no information on accessibility for disabled people on this service.

Other themes that should be highlighted are Culture, Leisure and Infrastructure. There were many posts about new recreational areas and parks that have been developed or redeveloped within the city. These include an update about Madureira Park, which will be expanded to 8 more boroughs and a port area called Porto Maravilha (Figure 3). Similar to the posts around mobility, there was no mention of any access to these parks and recreational areas for people with disabilities.

In fact the only posts that specifically mentioned disability were those about the expansion of the Deodoro Sports Complex. Updates on the 3rd (Figure 4) and 7th of July point out that the facilities in 2016 will be the stage for 4 Paralympic sports, in addition to 11 other Olympic sports that will also be played there.

Figure 2: Post on free cable car installed in the Providencia community

Figure 3: Post on Porto Maravilha recreational area developed in the city

The analysis of 'Cidade Olímpica' on Facebook showed no attempt by the Brazilian government to highlight issues relating to disabled people and disability. From the total of 33 analysed posts, there was only one that referenced the issue and, tellingly, this reference was linked directly to the Paralympic Games. There was no reference to the legacy that projects will provide for citizens who have a disability. When it comes to the "Sport-For-Development" discourse, it was restricted to the construction of narratives that exalted great architectural infrastructure, mobility and leisure whilst failing to address issues of equality and access.

The posts focused on the regeneration of the city and the benefits provided but they did not make clear at all that these benefits could be accessed by all citizens. The page appears to have been used more to promote activity and the provision of material goods. People with disabilities did not receive adequate attention on the page and this leads to doubts over the long-lasting legacies for them if they are overlooked during this early stage.

It is also important to emphasize that the 'Cidade Olímpica' page could be used as a channel to strengthen awareness of people with disabilities and that the accessibility legacies

should be a way to promote integration. The lack of discussion of these issues on the page, which has the stated and overt aim of disseminating the legacy of Rio 2016, is a poor reflection of the attitude towards raising awareness of disabled communities as a legacy of the 2016 Games.

Here, opportunities to promote important values of sport for development are missed and wasted many times over. Social media has the opportunity to directly reach people and in the case of a Facebook page, this can lead to an interactive relationship that can improve the source and maximise the impact of the information given or product promoted.[42,43,44,45,46] It is in this sense that Lobel, Sandler and Varshney[47] argue for the joint approach of social media and institutions as a way to sell products, to promote brand awareness and expand the connections. This is best considered with regards to a company that designs its

Figure 4: Post on the infrastructure of Deodoro Spot Complex

referral program with two objectives in mind: to extract immediate revenue and to advertise to potential customers.

The Olympic Agenda 2048 recommendations made clear that the priorities for the Olympics movement include to be aware of the use of the internet platforms and social media.[49,50] The focus of the agenda for 2020 was not directly aimed at the Paralympics, however the report could be used as a benchmark towards sport for development.

Meanwhile, more than producing isolated contents or promoting the Fan Page with little theoretical foundation of using sport for development, the institution responsible for the fan page should identify the potential consumer in order to ensure that appropriate language is used and that an approach is taken that works towards achieving targets and aims. Sports fans are consuming more news, information and sport content

via media and mobile devices than ever before; hence the growth of the Internet represents an opportunity to interact with other athletes, fans or teams.[51] The media play a crucial and growing role in the dissemination of sports information available on different platforms.

Indeed, this could improve the communication between the parties (web pages and their users/clients).[48] Therefore, Rubio[52] and Darnell[20] reinforce that mega-events are a strong vehicle to connect politics, stakeholders and society whilst further exploring some elements in social media. This approach is recommended by Jarvie and Thornton[53] in the context of Sport-For-Development.

The Facebook page 'Cidade Olímpica' should follow the United Nations Sport for Development and Peace[54] recommendations and ensure that engagement covers as many sectors and implementation partners as possible to help to realize the potential of sport to advance the inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations include:

- Include persons with disabilities in their education materials as examples of participants.
- Make persons with disabilities a target group in their campaigns.
- Provide information to persons with disabilities on the location of accessible sport facilities.
- Encourage service providers and sport clubs to target persons with disabilities for inclusion in their activities (e.g., make sure that court time is provided to them).
- Educate physical education teachers, sport service providers, and sport clubs on methods of adaptation and inclusion in sport.
- Plan national sports days or events that highlight the inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Have politicians and government leaders recognize persons with disabilities in sport and make special appearances at their events.

Conclusion

The Facebook page 'Cidade Olímpica' is one example of a dissemination channel for the legacy of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. However, the justification of using the discourse of Sport-For-Development to emphasise the posts is not connected with the actual outcomes. The City Council promotes the investments made in infrastructure in the name of the Games and the benefits that these bring. However, they do this without any connection to people with disabilities. Although there is dissemination of information about the Olympic legacy, during the analysis period, these did not benefit the legacy for disabled people.

The updates praised major projects, but offered no information as to who could access them or how. Providing this information would show an integration into and an awareness of the promised Paralympic legacy.

By not considering Paralympic legacy, the 'Cidade Olímpica' page fails to fulfill one of its roles, which is to clarify and discuss the issue of disability in the host country. This is one of the objectives of the Rio legacy plan in 2016, which includes the development of accessibility as a way to promote the integration of people with disabilities in society.

From a theoretical point of view, it is revealed that the lack of attention to the Paralympic legacy has happened in the last editions of the Games too. Although there are plans for urban development, little is discussed about the ability of these schemes to impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

In the discourse of governments, where the Paralympics are present, what is reinforced is the development of sports venues adapted to these citizens in order to develop high-performance sport. However, the discourse of Sport-For-Development does not cover other legacies that the Paralympics can generate. This is highlighted very clearly through our research and is both a missed opportunity and a failure.

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Original Research

Sport in the lives of young people with intellectual disabilities: Negotiating disability, identity and belonging

Louisa Smith[1], Nikki Wedgwood[2], Gwynnyth Llewellyn[2], Russell Shuttleworth[3]

[1] University of New South Wales, School of Social Sciences, Australia
[2] University of Sydney, Faculty of Health Sciences, Australia
[3] Deakin University, School of Health and Social Development, Australia

Corresponding author email: nicole.wedgwood@sydney.edu.au

Abstract

Whilst there is now a growing body of sociological research on the role of sport in the social, gender and identity rehabilitation of people with physical impairments, research on the role of sport in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities primarily focuses on improving fitness, health and social interactions. Yet sport is not only a form of physical exercise, competition or leisure—it is also a powerful social institution within which social structures and power relations are reproduced and, less frequently, challenged. This paper provides insights into the role of sport and physical activity in the lives of four young Australians with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations from their own perspectives. Data from life history interviews elicits rich and in-depth insights, revealing that the meanings these young people give to their sporting experiences include—but also go beyond— concerns with fitness, health and social interactions. Though by no means representative of the role of sport for all young people with intellectual disabilities, it is evident that these four young people use sport to negotiate complex emotional worlds around disability, identity, and belonging—much like their physically impaired counterparts.

Background

Much of the research on sport and intellectual disability is informed by concerns about improving the fitness, health and social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations.[1-3] Yet sport is not simply a form of exercise, competition or leisure—it is also a powerful social institution within which social structures and power relations are reproduced and sometimes challenged. Arising out of specific social and historical contexts, sports usually develop in accordance with the interests of dominant social groups, thereby reproducing broad social structures like gender, ethnicity, class and ableism.[4-6] Indeed, sport ritually celebrates physical abilities and thus is imbued with ableism.[7] Yet, the sporting arena can also be the site of subversion, challenges or resistance to unequal power relations and can even be the site of both simultaneous reproduction and resistance of social structures.[8] Indeed, though on the one hand sports participation may highlight the *inabilities* of people with physical impairments, it can also simultaneously highlights their *abilities,* thus providing an 'in ya face' challenge to disablist stereotypes of people with physical impairments as weak, pitiful, dependent and passive.[9] However, it is unclear whether some people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations also use sport to challenge and undermine disablist pre-conceptions about them.

Sport is also a significant arena of identity construction— especially masculine identity. The particular importance of sport in masculinity construction is that '[w]hat it means to

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[1] Throughout this article, 'impairment' refers to a physiological condition and 'disability' refers to the way in which society excludes, oppresses and/or makes it difficult for people with impairments to participate in mainstream able-bodied society. This reflects the fact that disablism is not an inevitable feature of every relationship, situation and moment of the lives of people with impairments.

Keywords: sport; intellectual disability; identity; disability sport

be masculine is, quite literally, to embody force, to embody competence.'[10] Consequently, sport is one of the primary practices in which men and boys construct their gender identities and their relationships with other males.[11-13] Herein lies the rub for men and boys with physical impairments because they embody a lived contradiction between, on the one hand, hegemonic forms of masculinity (embodied skill/power/agency) and, on the other hand, impairment (reduced abilities/power/agency).[14,15] It has been argued that participation in disability sports, particularly hyper-masculine sports, is a way for men with physical impairments to construct or recuperate a hegemonic masculinity.[16, 17] For instance, in their study of men's quad rugby, Lindemann and Cherney found that performing with athletic skill and embodying the hyper-masculine violence and aggression commonly seen in able-bodied sport enabled a form of gender and identity rehabilitation which helped players to go from self-loathing and stigma to acceptance and pride. Yet, there is doubt about whether male social power constructed and conferred within disability sports has much currency in broader able-bodied society. A recent study exploring whether playing sport is a form of cultural capital in the construction of a masculine identity and in gaining peer acceptance for young men with physical impairments suggests this may not necessarily be the case; social status among their able-bodied peers was associated more with doing well in able-bodied sports from which they were mostly excluded.[18]

Despite masculinity being a significant focus in research on sport and physical impairment,[19-21] there is scant attention to the development of gendered identities through sport for people with intellectual disabilities. Yet in a society where masculinity and disability are culturally defined as contradictory, it is equally important to know whether and/or how people with intellectual disabilities experience and negotiate such lived and embodied contradictions.[14] Indeed, research on intellectual disabilities more generally has done little to look at broader theories of masculinity.[22]

Some research suggests that participating in sport can do the following for people with physical impairments: enhance relations with peers,[23] expand social interactions, experiences and networks, and initiate other social activities.[24] Yet, these positive experiences are far from universal. Many young people with impairments who attend mainstream schools have negative experiences of physical education, such as not being chosen for teams by peers,

being assigned marginal roles on the sidelines by teachers and/or being made to feel inferior to their able-bodied peers.[25, 26] Moreover, for those who do have positive social interactions in sporting contexts, these occur primarily in disability-specific sports and it is unclear if, or to what extent, these positive interactions spill over into other parts of their lives or other social contexts.

For people with intellectual disabilities, associations are also frequently made in the literature between participation in sport and increased social connection, interactions and acceptance. [27-29] Yet as Harada and colleagues point out, the fact is that "little is known of sport in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities."[28] The study reported here provides the opportunity to address this gap by seeking the perspectives of young people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations on the place of sport in their everyday lives.

Methods

This paper is based on the findings from life history interviews with four participants with mild intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations drawn from a larger study of 53 young people (aged 19–26) with a range of sensory, physical and intellectual disabilities. The main objectives of this broader study—the Transition to Adulthood Study*—are to identify the ways in which young Australians with impairments, as active, embodied and creative human agents, shape their transitional experiences and the extent to which these experiences are shaped by disablism. Participants were recruited indirectly via disability organisations that agreed to send their members invitations to participate in the study along with details of the study and consent forms. Once recruited, life history interviews were used to explore whether or how these young Australians with impairments meet the developmental and structural challenges of adolescence and emerging adulthood. These challenges include identity development, autonomy from family, community involvement and adult relationships.

For most of the thirteen participants with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations, their main sources of social connection and sense of identity were through their family and/or a disability service organisation or program that facilitated participation in various activities, such as drama, art or music. Where physical activities were part of

such programs (for instance, half an hour of group karate), this was a more passive approach to sport or physical activity, compared to the four in this paper who were self-motivated to regularly pursue a sport or physical activity outside of these programs and over a long period of time. Although most of the thirteen young people in the study with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations were engaged in sport or physical activity at some level (i.e. occasionally went to the gym or participated in Special Olympic programs), for the four participants featured in this paper, sport occupied a central place in their life story, particularly in their identity formation. The life histories of these four young participants reveals that they use sport to negotiate complex emotional worlds around disability, identity and belonging—much like their physically impaired counterparts.[16, 30-32] Though these four participants are not representative of the 13 participants with intellectual disabilities in this study, nor of young people with intellectual disabilities more broadly, this finding nevertheless adds further insight to the literature on the various roles of sport in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

Life history interviews are particularly useful when exploring the range, scope and contradictions around people's embodiment and identity formation.[33, 34] While the life history interviews often began with a broad opening question about their family and when they were born, interviewers also had an interview schedule which offered prompts for topics expected to be addressed about different phases of the life course, such as peer group membership, transitioning to work, and autonomy from family. There was some flexibility in how this schedule was used. For example, for two of the participants Maria and Zane—both of whom described themselves as talkers—the interview was largely based around a single opening question and occasional prompts from the interview schedule. Both of these participants enjoyed reading, so each participant was also sent a written copy of their case study. For Josh, the interview mainly followed the schedule, with his interview being audio recorded and returned to him for checking. For Jade, the structure of the schedule was not very useful whereas photos, other documents from her life and a tour of her house provided additional information and acted as prompts for her storytelling and explanation. This was particularly important as Jade has a moderate speech impairment. Her interview was written up in plain English and returned to her for checking.

Interviews lasted roughly two hours and each interview was transcribed verbatim. The life history case studies developed

from the interviews were structured around two sets of topics: The first set of topics were imposed by the interview schedule and were focused on chronological stages (e.g. family life, school, work, dating); the second set of topics were generated from the individual's life history interviews as themes which emerged as central and/or repeated concerns of participants (e.g. social exclusion, religion, teacher's aides). For the four participants in this paper, Maria, Zane, Josh and Jade, sport was central in their lives and emerged spontaneously from their stories. Once the interview had been analysed by the interviewer, another member of the team listened to the interview before reading the analysis. Both researchers then discussed and resolved any difference in opinion before integrating their analyses.

Results

This paper focuses on sport in the lives of these four young people and how this intersects with their transition to adulthood, identity and disability.

Maria

Of all the participants in our study, sport is the most redemptive and ameliorating for Maria. Maria lives with her parents and younger sister in an inner city suburb of a large city where she grew up. She comes from a white, middle-class Anglican family whom she describes as 'busy, loving and supportive.'

Maria found out that she had an intellectual disability towards the end of primary school when after some testing, her parents told her that she would need to attend another school with a support unit. Until then she had been 'almost normal, normal like wearing braces, reading magazines,' and had two or three close friends, hanging out 'as much as we could' and doing things like 'going to the movies, shopping... discos at the school, parties, sleepovers.' Thus, learning that she had a disability was very difficult: 'I thought I was normal. I thought I was the same as everyone else… I didn't know what a disability was or what kind of person had a disability.' She experienced a great deal of confusion and a tumultuous range of emotions as she tried to come to terms with learning she had a disability, 'At first I was sad, then I was pretty angry, then I was frustrated, then I was pretty much going all over again.'

Maria felt that finding out she had a disability when she was 12 or 13 was particularly difficult because of her formative age, saying 'so I was sort of a pre-teen by then... It was like a mirror shattering.' She felt like her identity was

disintegrating with the diagnosis, 'I tried to find out who I was, what my identity is.' Initially, she felt that having a disability meant: 'Being different, being a freak.' Maria withdrew from friendships, partly because she was going to leave her school in order to attend one with a disability support unit but also because she did not know how to relate to people with this new and unfamiliar sense of herself as a person with a disability: 'I had all of these thoughts of sticking with my friends in high school... But then I started to sort of drift away from all of those [non-disabled] friends I had in primary school and just went from bad to worse.'

Maria attended another private Anglican girls school for her senior schooling, which her parents selected because it had a disability support unit. Though she found the school very warm and supportive, change had always been difficult for Maria. Combined with the low point in her confidence and a period of unhappiness she found that 'it was pretty tough getting used to it... it took two or three years/a year and half or so to get used to it.' Maria says she was invited into the 'cool group' of 'mainstreamers' but chose not to because she preferred quieter activities than going to parties. Eventually Maria found a place in a social group she liked, which was made up of other students in the disability program who mostly remained socially separate from 'mainstreamers.'

When Maria was fifteen her mother encouraged her to join a disability sports program that provides 'those who haven't got much confidence in themselves with different kinds of support to become more social and active in the community.' Maria found this program to be 'the best thing.' Up until then, she had been feeling socially isolated in a 'mainstream netball' team, which made her 'even more depressed and antisocial and not really confident' because she 'just didn't feel like I was a part of anything.' In contrast, learning to play basketball in an organisation for people with disabilities, she felt 'the coaches and other people understood who we were as people with disabilities.' Maria says she 'never looked back on my old self' and describes her new self as:

More confident in my personality, my skills - yeah, I'm more social and outgoing. I try to get out in the community with them, so things like functions and discos and raffles and quizzes, things like that.

Playing sport with this program also gave Maria the opportunity to meet other people with disabilities. At first she found that 'it was quite a shock, really. I just saw all these people around me being talkative and playing a game together and just having fun.' Seeing the confidence of other people with disabilities has enabled Maria to 'come out' with a new identity – as a person with a disability who has friends with disabilities:

Not just the sport and the idea of playing, but the fact that it has people like me who have a disability and some who have gone through that stage or some who are starting to get through their personality and just mainly coming out.

Meeting and befriending other people with disabilities, not only through her own team but through national and international competitions, has also inspired Maria to find out more about how to become an advocate for disability issues. She has travelled internationally to a disability and youth forum where she 'got to see the sights …to explore different places and meet new people.' Her independent travel was facilitated by close relationships she had with other members of the Australian team and allowed her to be away from her parents for two weeks. Her involvement with her peers with disabilities from around the world expanded her views of the world, disability and herself:

I almost cried at the time when one of the guys … saying that in his country he can't go out to do shopping or hang out with friends or anything like that, because if someone sees them they throw rocks at them. He just wanted to die; he couldn't take it anymore. I was like 'I thought I had it bad!'… I feel so sorry for him but he's managed to pull through so much... I couldn't believe it.

Participation in this international sporting event as an advocate became a critical moment for Maria:

I just felt different somehow when I came back. I was like different somehow, more mature. Yeah, something inside of me just started to come out. It's one of those feelings where you can't describe it... I just wanted to do more for others and so I went into [a program supporting young people with leadership skills] and I told my story to schools, so I got to do that for a while... I told them how I felt when I found out I had my disability and what [Disability Program] has done for me … as well, how they helped me with my confidence and my leadership skills, and how I've managed to become the person that I am. I just feel that I'm growing more and more each day... I just think I'm going to learn more about myself each day and every year that goes by... I think everyone feels that way... I guess that feeling of seeing others and how they've managed to cope through their lives of having a disability, makes me want to do more for others as well as myself.

Taking up disability sport coincided with Maria turning 16 and receiving the disability support pension. This became symbolic for Maria of needing to take 'the ball in [her] hands… make the most of it.' This sporting metaphor shows how sport helped Maria's transformation into a more proactive approach to life:

[I felt I] should try and be a bit more mature in my studies as well as my life. So I started doing a lot more that I wouldn't do then, so I was becoming a bit more outspoken and just doing things that I didn't think I could do… I went on camps and went on things like the flying fox. I did things like [enter a national music competition]. I did the choir, like in school, so I was in the school choir. I talked to different people, I just did all sorts of different things.

At the time of her interview Maria was 19 years old and still played basketball and tennis with 'a lot of friends' from the disability sports program. She was active in her church and working in a full-time permanent position in a childcare centre. In her immediate future she wants to travel and move out of her home. She has long-term goals such as having her own family and home and also continuing her advocacy work. For Maria, sport has been empowering because it has provided her with an avenue to meet others with a disability, which in turn has enabled her to come to terms with and accept her own disability and also provide her with the opportunities to flourish in and beyond the disability sport community.

Jade

Similar to Maria, Jade found sport to be an important way of connecting with others in her home town of 2,000 people. For Jade, however, sport facilitated a connection with her family, rural community and able-bodied peers rather than enabling a connection with her disability, as it had for Maria. Jade has cerebral palsy, which affects her speech and movement (she has a slight limp). She also has cognitive limitations.

Jade, who was 19 years old at the time of the interview, is the eldest of three with a younger brother and sister, who are 16 and 8 years of age, respectively. She describes her family as very close, supportive and sporty. Her grandparents and parents all lived and grew up in the small country town where they still live. Her family's position in the small town is very important to Jade because 'everybody [in town] knows my family is good' and it means that 'if I need somebody [community members] ring up for me [and my family] come.'

For most of Jade's schooling she went to a government school close to her house, which serviced the whole town in which she lived with classes from Kindergarten through to Year 12. It seemed that the most important part of school for Jade was facilitating feelings of independence like walking to school and 'Not having to ask the teacher. Yeah, cos…when I start going in high school they help me… sometimes I do that by myself.' Despite enjoying school and having two good friends and a younger cousin who were 'kind...Let [me] sit with them,' Jade did not seem to have a social group or stable place in either primary or high school. Jade had always received learning support at school and seemed to experience more and more difficulty in learning and understanding as schoolwork became increasingly complex in upper high school.

Jade's family enjoy sport and also ride bikes together, recently having gotten Jade a 'four wheeler bike for Christmas.' Jade's mother and her siblings are all swimmers. Jade swims with a swim squad two nights a week and has 'got a fair few medals' from her swimming. When she turned 18 Jade's mother took her to watch a football game. After meeting and having her photo taken with one of the players, he is now her 'favourite player' and she roots for his team.

There are elements in Jade's story which were possible because she lives in a small town where her family facilitated her acceptance and integration into the community. For instance, Jade's mother held a position in the town that supported Jade in entering mainstream sport enabling Jade to then forge her own place in a team, playing touch football with a group of young people her own age:

Every Monday we play touch football together. Lately I play with them but… the first year I played with Mum to see how I go and I play on their team because she plays too and a couple of years ago I play on a different team.

Playing football and 'all the friendship I've got' from it has became very important to Jade's sense of community membership: 'All of [the team] live in [Jade's town]… and they come in every day to work so I see them. Say 'Hi,' chat.' Jade is aware, however, that these rich and interconnected relationships are a bubble of security and if she were to live anywhere else people may not be as understanding as they are in her hometown.

Zane

Sport is very important to Zane but not in a way that joins

and connects him to others. For Zane, sport is about a privately defined routine that he maintains in lieu of other structures in his life, such as work and social commitments. Zane has Down's Syndrome and his experiences with sport helped ameliorate the stigma he often experienced due to his recognisable impairment which is typically associated with intellectual impairment.

Zane's family comes from a migrant working class background, but their success has led his parents to live very comfortably. Zane describes his family as being very supportive. He is particularly close to his maternal grandparents but they live in a capital city 10 hours drive away.

Zane, who always attended a mainstream school, did not like school because he 'got bullied a lot' and he felt the bullying was very poorly handled by the school:

All the nasty things people say about me and when I tell them to stop, they won't stop, they keep on doing it, I'll just hit them because they wouldn't stop doing it and then the teachers will go off at me.

While Zane was bullied, he had a strong group of friends made up of 'all different types' of people. None of his friends had disabilities, because Zane was very clear that 'I don't relate to those kind of people.' Zane's best friend— who is now in gaol for doing 'something stupid…same ole' same, had a gun, he was on drugs'—would defend him from bullies by giving them 'a whack in the face.' Thus, the use of violence to 'solve' the problem of high school bullying may be part of the reason why martial arts resonated with Zane so strongly as a young adult, along with its masculinising aspects.

After Zane graduated from high school his parents relocated from the capital city in which he grew up to a beautiful holiday/retirement town where they bought a luxurious house with a pool. Now living in an isolated location, Zane must rely on his parents to drive him anywhere he wants to go. This, along with not working nor being a client of a disability service, leaves large amounts of unstructured time, which Zane fills by making his own routine. He trains in a home gym that his parents have set up under their home, timing it around his favourite daytime television shows. Consequently, Zane's opportunities for personal development and community participation beyond his parents' home are limited.

Zane's mother introduced him to Mixed Martial Arts

[MMA] when they first moved to this new location, presumably to aid Zane's transition and help him make friends. Zane became passionate about MMA: 'I love doing martial arts. I used to do it for fitness. I was a black belt but now I'm advanced Black belt… MMA. A bit like you see on TV.' Keeping fit, active and healthy has become central to Zane's identity and to his routine:

When I'm at home I do all the weights… It just keeps me active… it makes me feel great. You've got to love the right things, eat the right things. That's me… I don't do anything else in the day. That's just me.

But Zane had strong reasons for his commitment to his private sport-based routine; the disablism he has experienced and internalised throughout his life, including at the fast food store where he had his first and only experience of work. He found his work colleagues '...so rude. I'm going fast and they'd say 'Keep moving!'' This led Zane to quit after six months and declare, 'I don't do any work. I'm not much of a worker,' thus avoiding situations in which he felt victimised by able-bodied people. Hitting a punching bag has replaced hitting bullies and is an outlet for the anger he feels when people say 'nasty things' about him: 'when I come home I take it all out on that… sometimes I get upset too easy.' Some of Zane's private workouts help him to recover from disabling relations that have occurred in public.

When Zane's father took him to an event for people with Down's Syndrome when he was a child, this experience confirmed for Zane that he did not want to be associated with other people with Down's Syndrome—a common sign of internalised disablism known as 'dispersal'.[37] Since then, Zane has avoided situations involving other people with Down's Syndrome, thus distancing himself from his disability. He acknowledges, however, 'I was born with Down's Syndrome, something like that,' he also says, 'I haven't got it. I was born with it. Nothing much I can do about that. Just be me. Keep working out. Stay fit. That's just me.' In contrast to Maria, whose involvement in disability sports helped her 'come out' as someone with a disability, Zane's participation in sport seems to give him the opportunity to develop an alternative identity.

Through training and MMA, Zane is enacting a particular type of able-bodied masculinity with which he identifies. A number of times during the interview, Zane likened himself to other strong men who also train and are fit, like his brother-in-law who was a professional footballer: 'He's a pretty fit dude, exactly the same as me.' He also likened

himself through sport to his best friend at school who was in gaol at the time of the interview 'He's coming out now, he's doing what I'm doing, just training [physically].' Zane was keen to point out that 'I'm a good puncher. I'm a hard puncher… I always listen to a bit of rap. It builds me up a bit… makes me go faster.' Despite the role of sport in symbolically connecting Zane with able-bodied men rather than those with disabilities, these connections did not follow through in practical ways. Despite training at the local MMA club for a number of years, Zane says he does not have any real friends at MMA.

Josh

Like Zane, Josh who is 21 years old, also has Down's Syndrome. He and his family live in a small town but he commutes to a small regional centre where he works one day a week in manufacturing and two days a week doing manual labour. He spends another day a week with a support worker from a disability service organization learning about budgeting with the goal of moving out of home.

Josh attended his local primary school where he was picked on and got into fights. This pattern of being bullied and fighting at school continued when Josh moved to the larger K-12 school in the coastal town:

It was great. I loved it. I got in fights… someone's picking on me… first punch I did. No-one started it. I did. I bashed someone up. I was a big bully, I was fricken evil. Squash him to death. I went that far.

Throughout the interview, Josh oscillated between identifying as 'frickin evil' and being an 'undercover [cop]' who was keeping people safe, though he was much more personally committed to keeping everyone safe ('when I was a baby I had an accident and became a superhero').

At his mainstream school one of Josh's teacher's aides offered him friendship that he otherwise did not have at school: '[he] was my best teacher there. I like him the most… He's my best mate. I play football with him.' He also helped link Josh into social networks, getting him into a touch football team, which he really enjoyed: 'Best coach… we trained every day. I loved it… we got trophies and I got a medal… I got plenty of them.' Josh's touch football coach was his sister's father-in-law, so the sports arena became a way of extending family support out into the community.

Like many young adults, Josh stopped doing organised sport when he got older: 'I don't play any more. I get puffed out… I work out… I've got a home gym now.' Part of Josh's motivation to workout is to be healthy: 'When I get on weights I get fit and healthy. I eat fruit and vegies… and meat and protein… That's what I want to do.' That is not the main reason though. He says of his workouts: 'it's all about power and energy… It's all about power… do sit-ups. That's how you get six-packs… I do but I'm a little bit fat… I don't have a girlfriend yet.'

Josh makes other very deliberate choices about how he represents himself to women and the world in general. These choices are usually about making him feel more powerful: 'I like wearing a suit. Makes me feel good… get myself known… I like wearing army pants… I've got lots at home… I've got army boots too… I want to be an army man. Help people.' Indeed, at the interview Josh was wearing cargo pants, army boots and a shirt that showed off both his muscles and his tattoo. He had massive earphones on and a harmonica holder around his neck. A very cool dude, in many ways he looked like a typical 21 year old.

Discussion

It is evident in these four stories that for some young people with mild intellectual or cognitive disabilities, participating in sport is as much about negotiating disablism, identity and belonging in a disablist world as it is for some people with physical disabilities.[16, 30-32]

For Maria, after learning during adolescence that she had a disability, which significantly challenged her identity, playing in a disability-specific sports team helped her to reinvent herself with a disabled identity and as a disability advocate. Having been socialised as non-disabled for the first 12 years of her life, she had already established herself as 'normal' and not 'a freak.' Once her disability was diagnosed and then publicly signified by her enrolment in a special unit, Maria experienced an identity crisis during a very formative phase of life. She struggled with internalised disablism and the invisibility of her disability to others. Maria described this as a largely internal crisis and did not describe being discriminated against. Rather, she found herself withdrawing because of how she understood disability to be perceived by others. Doing sport with other people with disabilities, who seemed confident and like they were having fun, helped Maria to shift internalised stereotypes about disability[35] and therefore about herself. Reeve[36] argues that 'coming out,' which are the exact words that Maria uses, can be a liberating and painful way of challenging the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability, which it clearly was for Maria.

Jade, unlike Maria, did not have access to disability sports organisations, and so sport became about connecting with her able-bodied peers and the rural community in which she lived through playing in an able-bodied sports team. While Jade had grown up enjoying relatively high levels of social inclusion because of her family's position in town, it was not until she joined a sports team made up of young people her own age that she really enjoyed friendships with her peers. Before this her social satisfaction had been derived from relationships centred around adults, family, family friends and teachers. This was particularly so during her transition from school, when Jade experienced a troubling void of activities and employment. Sport provided a regular and routine way of meeting up with her peers and gave Jade a new level of independence from her family (for example, her teammates would pick her up and take her to training sessions).

Yet, living in a small or isolated community does not in and of itself necessarily result in higher levels of social interactions in sporting or other contexts, as in Zane's case. In his life, sport performs a number of roles: Enhancing his sense of masculinity; providing a routine; allowing a release of anger about any disablism he experiences; counteracting his disabled identity; and providing a sense of himself doing the right thing for his health. It has not, however, connected him with others. In part this is because of the sporting context, as Zane does not play a team sport. Yet he does train in an MMA centre and such places are often sites of strong camaraderie. However, despite being in a social setting that potentially could facilitate social connections, Zane says he does not feel connected to anyone there. In contrast to other participants with intellectual disabilities who train at local gyms and develop strong relationships with their trainers, Zane's use of his home gym only increases his physical and social isolation. Arguably, Zane's isolation is also amplified by his attitudes towards his impairment because he does not identify as disabled. Past experiences of disabilist discrimination, which can illicit emotional responses like shame, anger, frustration or embarrassment[35] and impact where people go and what they do,[38] have left Zane disengaged from disability or employment services, which for other participants, facilitated regular activities, transport, social connection and broader participation.

For Josh, who wanted to be in the army but could not, having the strong body and appearance of a soldier made him feel like 'normal like the other people around this town.' To Josh, working out seems to be not only about being powerful but also about being masculine and

attractive to women and about fitting into social spaces that are not marked out as disability spaces, such as truck yards, buses, the town centre and music festivals. This sense of power in his physical embodiment and strength also helps to counteract the lack of power he experiences in other arenas of his life (for instance, how his workplace is determined by an agency rather than his own preferences). This is important given that people with disabilities have a lower sense of empowerment and autonomy in comparison to the rest of the population.[39]

These stories clearly illustrate that for some people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, participation in sport can ameliorate disablism by offering a way of both accepting one's disability and/or dealing with the discrimination faced because of it. It is widely acknowledged in the disability studies literature that dealing with the attitudes and perceptions of others is among one of the hardest aspects of having a disability. Indeed, the lives of the four young people presented here show how they use sport in various ways to negotiate, ameliorate and challenge these attitudes and their subsequent psycho-emotional effects—what Reeve calls psycho-emotional disablism.[35] For Maria, this is by providing supportive relationships and an arena in which to 'come out' as disabled; for Zane, by providing an outlet in which to physically release his anger and thereby helping him deal with the harmful and confidence-sapping effects of prejudice towards him based on his disability; for Josh and Zane, by helping to overwrite their recognizable disability (Down's Syndrome) with a 'normal' and accepted masculine embodiment; for Jade, by connecting her with her peers and community in ways that were not available to her at school or the workplace.

By looking at sport from the perspectives of these four young people with intellectual disabilities, we can also see that while sport can provide a routine and regular way of connecting with others through a shared fun activity, it sometimes becomes a substitute for other forms of social interaction and belonging. For the two young men in the study, sport is about doing weights and fighting, not about connecting with others as it is for the two young women in the study. For Zane and Josh, it is more about constructing a conventional masculine identity via normative masculine practices unavailable to them in other traditional sites of masculinity construction (e.g. sexual relationships, workplaces or male peer groups). Though participating in sport connects them with a group of men with whom they symbolically identify and also with whom they wish to be identified by others, it has not, however, facilitated actual social interactions or relationships. Nor has sport increased

their access to a conventional masculine identity outside of the sporting arena.

As the literature suggests, sport has a great deal of potential to positively influence the lives of young people with intellectual disabilities. Maria's experiences are a good illustration of this. However, participating in a sports activity does not automatically improve community participation, belonging or self-esteem for all young people with intellectual disabilities. Rather, as this study demonstrates, a complexity of factors influence and moderate sporting experiences including geographical location, gender, class, impairment type/severity, social supports and life-phase. Life-phase is a particularly critical consideration for young people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive limitations because they are faced with the developmental tasks of carving out an adult identity in a world in which they are frequently infantalised and of negotiating a sense of belonging in a world, which is largely unwelcoming and unaccommodating. Participation in sports offers not only health benefits and the opportunity for social networks to develop. As this study demonstrates, sport also provides some young people with intellectual disabilities the opportunities to negotiate identity, resist disablism and forge a stronger sense of self, which are all facets of development sometimes overlooked in promoting social inclusion of young people with disabilities. Thus, an ongoing challenge for sports providers and disability services is to devise supportive sporting environments that facilitate a variety of possible benefits and individual meanings for young people with a wide range and level of intellectual disabilities – rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

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Original Research

Developing disability sport: The case for a critical pedagogy

Aaron Beacom[1], Gill Golder[1]

[1] University of St Mark & St John, Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, UK

Corresponding author email: abeacom@marjon.ac.uk

Abstract

As a key stakeholder in the development of physical culture and the promotion of inclusive practice, the university sector has the capacity to contribute extensively to expanding and enhancing provision for disability sport at the local, regional and global level.[1,2,3] Such activity is, in part, predicated on nurturing students as critical practitioners able to challenge established patterns of thinking about disability and traditional models of activity provision. This criticality should inform approaches to programming and promotion of inclusive practice both as part of the university physical activity portfolio and in the practitioner's subsequent work with local, regional and international stakeholders. It should also equip students to challenge the systemic inequities increasingly characteristic of competitive disability sport in local and global settings.[4,5,6] This paper reports on a small scale action research project, which sought to explore the impact of one University's adoption of a critical pedagogy approach to teaching and learning through a level 6 elective module. The research identified that placement learning provided an impetus for the students to engage in more critical reflection and the notion of a 'lived experience' through the range of elements of the module was essential in developing students' ability to question and challenge established ways of working. It also considers implications for adopting critical pedagogic approaches to teaching and learning for students, academics and administration.

Introduction

This research project reflects in part on the journey of a small higher education institute (HEI) with a sports specialism, which has recently gained university status and which is orientating itself to the changing role of higher education in wider society (local and global). In relation to sport and disability, a number of questions have emerged from literature and previous research[7] that have helped frame the research. In particular, how can the study of disability sport be effectively integrated into a wider exploration of an inclusive physical culture within the university sector that takes account of the transient and relative nature of ability? Universities are not only centres for knowledge production and servicing the knowledge economy, but should also engage in critiquing established ways of doing things and exploring alternative approaches to the social order.[8] It is in this sense that the case for a critical pedagogy is made. From this perspective then, when developing students as the next generation of coaches, development workers and sports strategists, the focus should be on nurturing critically reflective practitioners.[9] The authors contend that such students require a critical understanding of the essence of disability, including its relative and transient characteristics. They should be able to appreciate the key conceptual and contextual debates relating to disability, including for example, issues relating to power and powerlessness in decision-making processes concerning the resourcing and programming of sport and physical activity.

The reflective qualities suggested above should inform how students individually and universities collectively engage in the promotion of inclusive-sporting forms. In this sense, universities have a role in heightening an awareness of inclusive sport and broadening the participation base in physical activity; for example, through engagement with

Keywords: disability; pedagogy; university; neoliberalism; praxis

community-based programmes such as the Special Olympics or challenging sedentary lifestyles among community groups such as the elderly. This work can take place at the local and regional level but may also inform engagement with the sport as part of the international development agenda. In this, students should be equipped to challenge practices of exclusion where these become apparent. This includes in a wider sense, engagement with strategic debate concerning global asymmetry in the resourcing of disability sport and the challenges this Global North-Global South imbalance presents for the development of international disability sport organizations. This asymmetry, which now presents a major challenge for the International Paralympic Movement, does merit a separate paper and is currently the subject of further research by the authors.

It is not the intention here to engage in an extended debate concerning what constitutes 'disability' generally and 'disability sport' more specifically. Nevertheless, conceptual clarity is important from the onset. For that reason the paper will adopt the United Nations perspective of disability which contends that, 'persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'[10] This interpretation emerges from a perspective on disability which focuses primarily on the social and cultural responses to the impairment that have the potential to disable the person.[11] Writers such as Shakespeare have written about and expanded upon the limitations of the so-called social model of disability, particularly the insufficient recognition of the unique experiences of individuals with impairments.[12] Nevertheless, the impact of the social model on wider perceptions of disability is generally acknowledged and it forms the terms of reference for legislative developments and a movement toward inclusive education that have enhanced the quality of life for many people with disabilities. While students referred to in the case study are required to approach the conceptual debates critically, the social model provides the starting point for their self-reflection on disability and a basis for exploring the ways in which equity and inclusion are dependent upon addressing the cultural and physical barriers to participation. From this perspective also, ideas of advocacy, self-advocacy and empowerment can be introduced as key features of civic movements aimed at promoting disability rights.

In relation to disability sport, the paper adopts the position of sport broadly defined, encapsulating a range of formal

and informal physical activities which include though are not limited to codified parasports. This broad definition was important given the focus of the case study group since a number of students were drawn from the outdoor adventure programme, which adopted a different perspective on the nature of physical activity. The unifying theme was the promotion of a physical culture based on the psycho-social and physical benefits of physical activity irrespective of ability. In this, students were able to reflect on collective concerns as well as individual interests, for example the global political and developmental significance of disability sport in the context sport for development movement and its attempts to respond to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[13]

Given the context above, this paper seeks to evaluate the impact on the student experience of developing a critical pedagogy approach to teaching and learning through a level 6 elective module. The wider research question concerns the implications of such approaches for the expansion of the university curriculum and community development portfolio.

Higher Education and the role of the university

Radice argues that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of higher education, since 'the purpose of the university has changed from the education of the elites in business, politics, culture and the professions to the provision of marketable skills and research outputs to the 'knowledge economy.'[14] In an era dominated by neoliberal ideals the public sector has had the values, structures and processes of private sector management imposed upon it. In the case of universities, neoliberalism has taken the form of the so-called 'new public management' (NPM) strategies. According to Olssen and Peters, there are three core dimensions of NPM; 'flexibility (in relation to organizations through the use of contracts); clearly defined objectives (both organizational and personal), and a results orientation (measurement of and managerial responsibility for achievement of).'[15] Neoliberalism has seen an increased focus on practitioner research and a growing emphasis on work-based learning. In the case of disability sport this may involve applied learning experiences linking vocational experiences or awards (e.g. coaching awards) to critical knowledge and discourse. In addition, Olssen and Peters argue neoliberalism has seen a growth in 'alternative sources of knowledge outside the universities and a shift from an elite system of higher education to a mass system of higher education.'[16] The distinction between types of knowledge can be related to this shift with 'mode one

knowledge' needing a protected or privileged area for development and 'mode two knowledge' being much more based in practice.[17] Mode two knowledge has been defined by Bourner et al as;

...likely to be produced by practitioners through reflection on practice or as a result of learning their way out of problems encountered in situ at work. It is less likely than mode one knowledge to respect traditional academic disciplines, and is work-based knowledge rather than campus-based knowledge.[18]

With this concentration on professional work-based practice (as opposed to academic), neoliberal thinking has encouraged an increasing emphasis on transferable skills and a general shift towards vocationalism and professionalism in higher education. In the context of disability sport, neoliberal thinking would typically encourage a transformed theoretical infrastructure where students and practitioners enhance their professional capabilities by engaging in concepts such as becoming reflective practitioners or using experiential learning, in order to develop a new understanding of academic theory as preparation for the world of professional work. The role of universities in the development of disability sport is thus very much linked to the way in which knowledge is generated and how this knowledge can be applied to the discipline.

There is general acknowledgement of universities as socially accountable organizations that have to deliver social benefits through their core functions, whilst acknowledging differences in a range of issues, for example on the role of markets and the state in the development of higher education and the balance between public and private goals and the responsibilities for the university in developing an 'employability 'programme. This is reflected for example, in a call in 2009 by HEFCE for UK universities to produce more micro-studies demonstrating the public benefits they produce.[19] Each of the areas invited for micro-study could be contextualised in relation to disability and disability sport as follows:

• *Public / community / civic engagement* - the opportunity for sports-based interventions targeted at people with disabilities, could be an example of this; similarly the potential of universities in providing the basis for development of competitive disability sport or students acting as volunteers to work with disabled sports clubs and societies or in schools

• *Engaging in the public policy process* - applying this to the disability sport sphere, public provision can be shaped by academic debate concerning the nature of disability and how best to secure equitable access to disability sportat all levels ensuring that the production and dissemination of knowledge really does inform the nature of provision. Some clear opportunities here link to access to mainstream clubs and parasport classification

• *Student enterprise / social enterprise* - for example developing enterprise opportunities in the field of disability sport and monitoring and supporting student 'start up' programmes and self-employment working in the field of sport and disability

• *Exchanges (people-based)* - for example drawing from the expertise and experience of those working or volunteering in the disability sport field to come and work with students or conversely university staff working in community settings to support provision or opportunity

• *Evaluating impacts* – for example information on value generated from disability sport based interventions would help inform universities as to how best to engage with community based programmes in order to optimise benefits expand partnerships.

In discourse relating to the role of universities in wider society and in promoting ideas of social justice, the term 'public good' as an alternative frame of reference to the dominant neoliberal model, has emerged.[20] At the same time, there is recognition that the 'public good' remains a contested term (whose 'public' and whose 'good'?). In an era dominated by neoliberal thinking, it is contended that a balance between market forces and the public good needs to be struck and that indeed the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A case in point may be to consider routes to development and promotion of parasport through the market place without losing sight of key values of social justice and disability rights that underpin the Paralympic Movement. There are opportunities to focus on the promotion of an 'inclusive society' as a fundamental tenet of the public good and from there, to enhance the development of recreational and sporting opportunities for differently abled (students as well as local community) as a central tenet of the university mission.

Universities and the idea of a critical pedagogy

The era of neoliberalism has brought with it a perceived move to a 'knowledge-based society and economy'[21] and

the new role of the university in developing the capacities required of the flexible, 'lifelong' worker/learner.22 This aligns learning in higher education to that of adult education where, as research suggests, the importance of asking questions about processes of social and cultural formation is emphasized.[23] In addition, adult education perspectives emphasize power relations in educational settings.[24]

Ares suggests that the aim of education is learning that comes from critical examination of the social order that leads to action in service of social justice as the result of the learning process.[25] This is supported by Monzó who controversially suggests that 'A fundamental goal of the university must be to advance a democracy based on the socialist principles of freedom and critique.'[26] Giroux indicates,

capacities required of the flexible, 'lifelong' worker/learner.[22] This aligns learning in higher education to that of adult education where, as research suggests, the importance of asking questions about processes of social and cultural formation is emphasized.[23] In addition, adult education perspectives emphasize power relations in educational settings.[24]

Prosser & Trigwell contend that according to the 'conceptions' model of learning in higher education, the highest understanding of learning 'is focused on the importance of knowledge (abstract, relative and contested), which is gained through an ability to 'relate and distinguish evidence and argument' and 'look for patterns and underlying principles.'[28]

Ideas about how students can be developed as critical thinkers, capable of challenging social mores and institutional priorities, has long been part of discourse around the meaning of higher education.[29] Paul suggested that in its strongest sense, critical thinking implies the ability to think critically about one's own position, arguments, assumptions, and worldview.[30] Soden and Maclellan contended that critical thinking includes the ability to unpack concepts, recognize contradictions, develop arguments, provide evidence, examine the implications of evidence, question interpretations of evidence, and suggest alternative interpretations.[31] This argument gains traction when considered in the context of the current political and economic climate, which presents particular challenges for the promotion of critical thinkers where the emphasis is on preparing students for the market place. Challenges are apparent in situations where students are preparing for specific roles; for example, the delivery of adaptive forms of sport and physical education and where teaching can gravitate toward the development of specific skills sets

combined with problem solving. This includes engaging students in thinking beyond the 'technical,' by opening up a range of social and political questions such as the systemic inequity entrenched across global society that impacts the life choices available to people with disabilities.

Pishghadam and Meidani suggested that critical pedagogy is embedded in the notion of critical thinking and is a broad field of theory and practice, which originates from the modernist perspective of the later Frankfurt School, Freirean pedagogy and postcolonial discourse, as well as postmodernism.[32] Critical pedagogy challenges our long-held assumptions and leads us to ask new questions, and the questions we ask will determine the answers we get. Freire contended that critical pedagogy empowers classroom participants to critically reflect upon the social and historical conditions that give rise to social inequalities and to question the status quo.[33] Applying critical pedagogy to the study of disability and disability sport therefore seems apt as Nevin, Smith and McNeil state, since models of disability that are needs based, reinforce inequalities.

The focus on people with disabilities, once left to special education professionals and charitable organizations, has been changing from a charity model based on medicalization of disability (i.e., disablement as the source of problems) to an empowerment model based on the relationship between disability and society (i.e., society as much or more a source of the problems as particular impairments).[34]

Nevin, Smith and McNeil contend that when education becomes a process of empowerment that enables citizens to make choices and influence their world, this suggests that a critical approach to pedagogy has been adopted.[35] McArthur notes that 'A common aspect of critical pedagogy is the intention to foster public spaces, in which learning within schools and higher education is not artificially separated from society, but rather engages with the broader society in a creative and transformative dialectic.'[36] This is supported by Fobes and Kaufman, who suggest that critical pedagogy is both a form of practice and a form of action; it implores us to use our teaching and learning to effect positive social change, rather than just how to teach and learn or what to teach and learn.[37]

The teaching of sport and disability in this context requires a consideration of wider social dynamics including locating disability within policy discourses like those related to civil

and human rights. However, such topics cannot be taught in a vacuum, requiring a level of political and civic literacy that must be nurtured across the student's higher educational experience (and preferably grounded in their earlier educational experience) and which in this way, link to teaching of citizenship. The body of evidence developing around disability studies in higher education supports this as Linton explains:

Disability studies provides the means to hold academics accountable for the veracity and the social consequences of their work, just as activism has served to hold the community, the education system, and the legislature accountable for disabled people compromised social position.[38]

The promotion of civic literacy, a particular objective of many concerned with the current trajectory of higher education (advocating education based interventions as a means of challenging perceived decline in civic literacy), is not necessarily predicated on the development of critical thinking. Indeed in relation to disability, adopting a paternalistic approach of traditional public and voluntary service ideas of support (providing assistance to the less able, can in many ways, align to ideas associated with the medicalization of disability, which in turn problematizes disability) may run directly contrary to the criticality associated with more radical and emancipatory perspectives on disability and society, which include engagement with sports and physical activity-based interventions. In this sense, a significant level of sophistication is required to enable students to critically interpret the meaning of civic responsibility and the implication of established power relations in the context of contemporary discourses on disability and society. It is at this point that a critical pedagogy begins to depart from ideas of for example a service learning pedagogy which, with its focus on experiential learning, creates an environment where students can connect theory and practice while at the same time enhancing the transferable skills needed to operate in the contemporary marketplace.[39]

Teaching disability sport and physical education

The study of disability sport (including parasport), as part of a wider disability studies genre, is a growing area for academic study in part because of the rapidly expanding global interest in the phenomenon.[40] Shapiro, Pitts, Hums & Calloway argue that it is important for professionals in the field to be prepared to deal with the uniqueness of disability sport, ensuring that they are knowledgeable about its complexity and its relationship to the wider sports environment.[41] Many degree programmes embed consideration of disability in their curriculum design through three key design features: a) permeated or infused approach, b) specialist studies and c) options.[42] While having dedicated courses on disability in sport has a place in the curriculum, Shapiro, Pitts, Hums & Calloway suggest that it reinforces the notion that segregation of knowledge about individuals with disabilities is the norm.[43] Rizzo et al suggest that infusing or permeating knowledge about disability throughout the curricula should be the goal so as to avoid emphasizing differences or assigning specialists to 'deal with' disability rather than all faculty assuming ownership of disability issues throughout their curricula.[44] There have been a number of specific benefits to this infusion approach identified in research:

Specific benefits of infusion include (a) increased knowledge and understanding of disability, individuals with disabilities, and issues of equity; (b) increased commitment to disability issues and concerns of individuals with disabilities; (c) increased collaboration among colleagues; (d) acquisition of new skills by higher education faculty; and (e) increased ownership and commitment to disability and elimination of stigma.[45]

However, the method of curricular design does not automatically result in development of principals that underpin critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy focuses on how to create classroom spaces that challenge students to question assumptions, explicitly recognize power relationships in their analysis of situations, engage with other students in collaborative efforts to critically reflect on the embedded network of relationships, and consider alternatives for transformation of that network.[46]

According to Shelton, critical pedagogy has the aim of educating students to take risks, recognising that teaching always entails the transfer of some values; therefore, learning should include the learners' personal background and environmental issues, especially cultural traditions and social practices.[47] The implication for teachers is that teaching should help students become more questioning of commonly accepted truisms.[48] Freire proposed that education should be a dialogical process in which students and teachers share their experiences in a non-hierarchical manner.[49] According to Giroux, students are active participants in that together with the teacher they correct the curricula, share their ideas and learn to challenge assumptions.[50] Ellsworth develops this theme, suggesting the need to destabilize control by asserting that teachers and

students alike must approach the classroom in the dark about what forms the social construction of difference will take in their work together.[51] Moreover, all participants in the educational process must acknowledge that whatever perspectives they bring to the classroom or acquire, they will by definition be partial, limited, conditional, and 'potentially oppressive to others.' Teaching of sport and disability requires a consideration of wider social dynamics including locating disability within policy discourses, such as those related to civil and human rights.

Research carried out by Pishghadam and Meidani made a number of suggestions of the implications of teaching using critical pedagogy, which were that a) critical pedagogy should become an integrated part of the educational system by ensuring that students should learn critical thinking and develop the necessary skills throughout an extended period from the first years of schooling; b) when teachers introduce critical theories at school or university, cultural and social issues must be taken into serious consideration so as not to have detrimental effects on the students; c) there should be clear planning to find the best time to familiarise students with critical concepts and issues.[52]

Nocella suggested the emergence of disability pedagogy, which should be thought of as a fundamental challenge to society and an attempt to provide a critical pedagogy into the nature of society's normal relations.[53] Disability pedagogy is based on providing spaces for people with disabilities, supports their/our inclusion in society and school, and supports their/our activism that promotes and supports these notions, which includes providing platforms for their/our experiences to be heard and told.[54] Considering this in relation to teaching students about disability sport, the central concepts need to be seen as a social, political and cultural phenomenon. At the same time, the objectives are the development of critically reflective individuals who question attitudes, practices, legislation, barriers and benefit in the sector and who are able to generate new meaning for policy developments aimed at improving access to sporting opportunities for people with a disability. By doing this they fulfil Nocella's ideas about the purpose of critical pedagogy.

The central task of critical theorists and critical pedagogues is to analyze and identify the cause, justification, and history of particular oppressions and to provide space for experiences of that oppression to be heard and understood.[55]

The importance in teacher, coach and sport development education of promoting inclusive approaches to sport and physical education has never been greater. Goodley suggests that as the number of children with disabilities in mainstream school increases, the pressure on teachers, coaches and other facilitators to be able to develop imaginative and effective adaptive practices that account for a range of conditions, increases.[56] Rather than needs-based services that focus on helping individuals with disabilities 'cope' with deficits, Nevin, Smith and McNeil support a more empowering person-centered, strengths-based orientation tied to perceptions of the individual as competent and thriving.[57] The focus on strengths-based orientation supports using more active learning strategies, which incorporate diverse pedagogies to stimulate student engagement.[58] When considering inclusive sport and disability, it is useful to draw from the debates around inclusive teaching and learning in schools. Norwich and Lewis concluded that a continua of teaching approaches would be useful to capture the appropriateness of more intensive and explicit teaching for children with different patterns and degrees of learning difficulties.[59] In their work, Norwich and Lewis argue that the emergence of a pedagogy for teaching those children with disabilities or special educational needs should focus on commonality and specialization that highlight the value of the continuum concept and how differentiation or specialization can be seen as a process of intensification.[60] Similar stages of learning and a continuum for teaching disability studies can be applied to university students as they engage in the breadth of teaching experiences offered.

In teaching disability sport and inclusive physical education, there are a wide range of agendas of worldwide significance. For example, globalization, social responsibility, sustainable environments as well as topical events such as the Paralympic Games or models of disability each require attention as part of the curriculum. A challenge for academics is to assess how these debates can be integrated into a critical pedagogy and how students can be encouraged to think critically about the implications and challenge the status quo. In a period dominated by neoliberal thinking, tensions exist between the emancipatory role of higher education reflected in the underpinning beliefs of critical pedagogy, which according to McArthur stands firmly upon a normative basis which contends that 'higher education should not succumb to narrow, economic interpretations of its role,' and a HE sector driven by economic imperatives to develop 'global, entrepreneurial, corporate, commercialised universities.'[61] According to Stevenson, Burke and Whelan, under such conditions, pedagogies in higher education are reduced to the 'language

of the market, including 'delivery', 'style' and 'distinctiveness' and to notions of consumer demand and satisfaction becomes an educational package provided by universities competing in the business of higher education.'[62]

The university sector and learning about disability sport: the case study

Previous research exploring how undergraduate students generated knowledge of disability focused on mode two knowledge developments where students learnt through reflection on their work experiences, interaction with other students and with instructors.[63] In doing this, students were encouraged to identify and use tools for analysing problems or ways of working and finding strategies for challenging their own and co-workers' practices. The process of change identified in this study was extended over several courses and years and was the culmination of a program of study as well as work experience.

Similar research carried out by the authors into pedagogic approaches for developing a critical pedagogy for disability sport followed students across a series of modules and experiences. A year two elective module was selected by some students and followed with a year three module that focused on contemporary developments in disability sport. The module included a placement element where students engaged in a variety of disability sport and outdoor education contexts. A range of pedagogic strategies were used by staff to actively involve students in their own learning which support the discussion about the role of the teacher in critical pedagogy. Table one summarises Aliakbari and Faraji suggestions made about these roles.[64]

In this research, the module team implemented a number of strategies to adopt a critical pedagogy approach to teaching and learning. One such strategy adopted by the lecturers drew on authentic materials such as video and images which according to Ohara, Safe, & Crookes serve as the basis for discussion and critical reflection of the culture.[65] A second strategy adopted was that of dialogism, which encourages student voice, where as a result of listening to peer discussion around a series of posed questions, they learnt about their understanding of key problems relating to contexts in which they completed placements and debated possible solutions to problems that were encountered. Problem-solving pedagogy was used to explore how students developed their critical understanding of conceptual debates in disability sport through the range of taught and experiential learning experiences. The

assessment activity took the form of a poster presentation where students were required to critically reflect upon contextual developments for their placement provider and on their efficacy as a facilitator in this context. Supporting problem- solving pedagogy, a number of guest lecturers were engaged to involve students in uncovering reality, striving for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality and developing a more accurate perception of disability in sport and society.

Case study – evaluating the implementation of critical pedagogy approach to teaching sport and disability

Research on effective teaching over the past three decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth.[66] Reflective practice has been defined as 'a disposition to enquiry incorporating the process through which student, early career and experienced teachers structure or restructure actions beliefs, knowledge and theories that inform teaching for the purpose of professional development.[67]

Reflective practice has also been defined in terms of action research. Action research could be most simply described as practitioner-based research, and teachers use such research extensively to improve practice as part of professional development opportunities or higher degrees. 'Action research concerns action, and transforming people's practices (as well as their understandings of their practices and the conditions under which they practice).'[68] Action research takes as its starting point the belief that part of the purpose of action research is to help us to confront realities about our practice.[69]

Action research can facilitate change among teachers and students because it narrows the gap between theory and practice as well as teaching and research that traditional quantitative research can sometimes create.[70] McNiff and Whitehead[71] comment upon how action research can be used to help develop and improve personal and professional practices. As such, the intention of this small-scale action research project was to explore the efficacy of adopting a critical pedagogy approach to sport and disability teaching and learning, in developing practitioners capable of engaging in meaningful reflective practice and able to critically evaluate ideas of physical culture as an empowering experience for people with disabilities. In this, the focus of the research was to develop a critical pedagogy in students, in order to provide insights into the hidden subtleties relating to the lived experience of disability that may otherwise be overlooked.[72]

Table one: *Roles of staff and students in critical pedagogy. (Summary of Aliakbari and Faraji.[i])*

Teacher – student relationship	Characteristics of the learning experience
Teachers are problem posers[ii]	Learning through problem solving and practical application leads students to take a more active role in determining their experiences and positions within society[iii]
Teacher must empower his or her students by raising their awareness of reproducing process of an inequitable status quo in schooling and offer societal institutions[iv]	Teachers are *Transformative Intellectuals* who have the knowledge and skill to critique and transform existing inequalities in society[v]
Teachers learn from students, appreciate their viewpoints and take part in the dialogical process[vi]	Teachers enable students to become cultural producers who can rewrite their experiences and perceptions[vii]
Teachers help students learn from each other and to theorize and understand how to question the authoritarian power of the classroom[viii]	Students are encouraged to act as active agents in their own education and to develop a critical consciousness that helps them evaluate the validity, fairness, and authority within their educational and living situations[ix]
Teachers have a central role as they spend the most time with students and have the greatest impact on students and program and how learning occurs in the classroom[x]	Students through reflection can determine the necessary types of action that they should take in order to improve the life conditions of the oppressed groups[xi]
Teachers and students as co-agents, that is, teacher's authority directs the class but this authority differs from that in the traditional pedagogy[xii]	Students and teachers should engage in questioning knowledge but it is the teacher who helps the students to identify how to move forward critically in their practice[xiii]

[i] Aliakbari M, Faraji E. Basic principles of critical pedagogy 2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR. 2011 17: 77-85.

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Wink contends the following:

Critical pedagogy gives voice to the voiceless; gives power to the powerless. Change is often difficult, and critical pedagogy is all about change from coercive to collaborative; from transmission to transformative; from inert to catalytic; from passive to active. Critical pedagogy leads us to advocacy and activism on behalf of those who are the most vulnerable in classrooms and in society.[73]

The action research focused on the teaching of and learning experiences through a level-6 elective module titled New Perspectives on Disability Sport, which ran in Semester B with a cohort of 15 students. The module used carefully targeted and calibrated critical readings designed to gradually stretch the student over the course of the taught element of the module. Visiting speakers were also used to enhance the taught component of the module which was then complimented by a placement component. In exploring the extent to which students had engaged in critical pedagogy, they were encouraged to unpick past and present beliefs, values and experiences and consider future

implications to enable them to develop the skills needed to be a critically reflective practitioner. In doing this, students were asked to go beyond reflecting on their experiences in light of comparative viewpoints and demonstrate a deeper level of reflection by reframing their understanding of situations from alterative perspectives. Such a perspective, according to Jay and Johnson, illustrates distinctions between levels of reflection moving from comparative study to considering how their observations relate to their own morals and potential implications of what is happening in their context in relation to wider society.[74]

The action research used a staged approach to data collection, following the action research cycle and building on the experiences of the students through the duration of the module, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

The first method was a focus group interview carried out during the taught element of the module (March 2014). The discussions in the focus group required students to draw from all elements of the taught experience to focus on their own experiences and the experiences of family members in

Figure 1: *The Action Research Process*
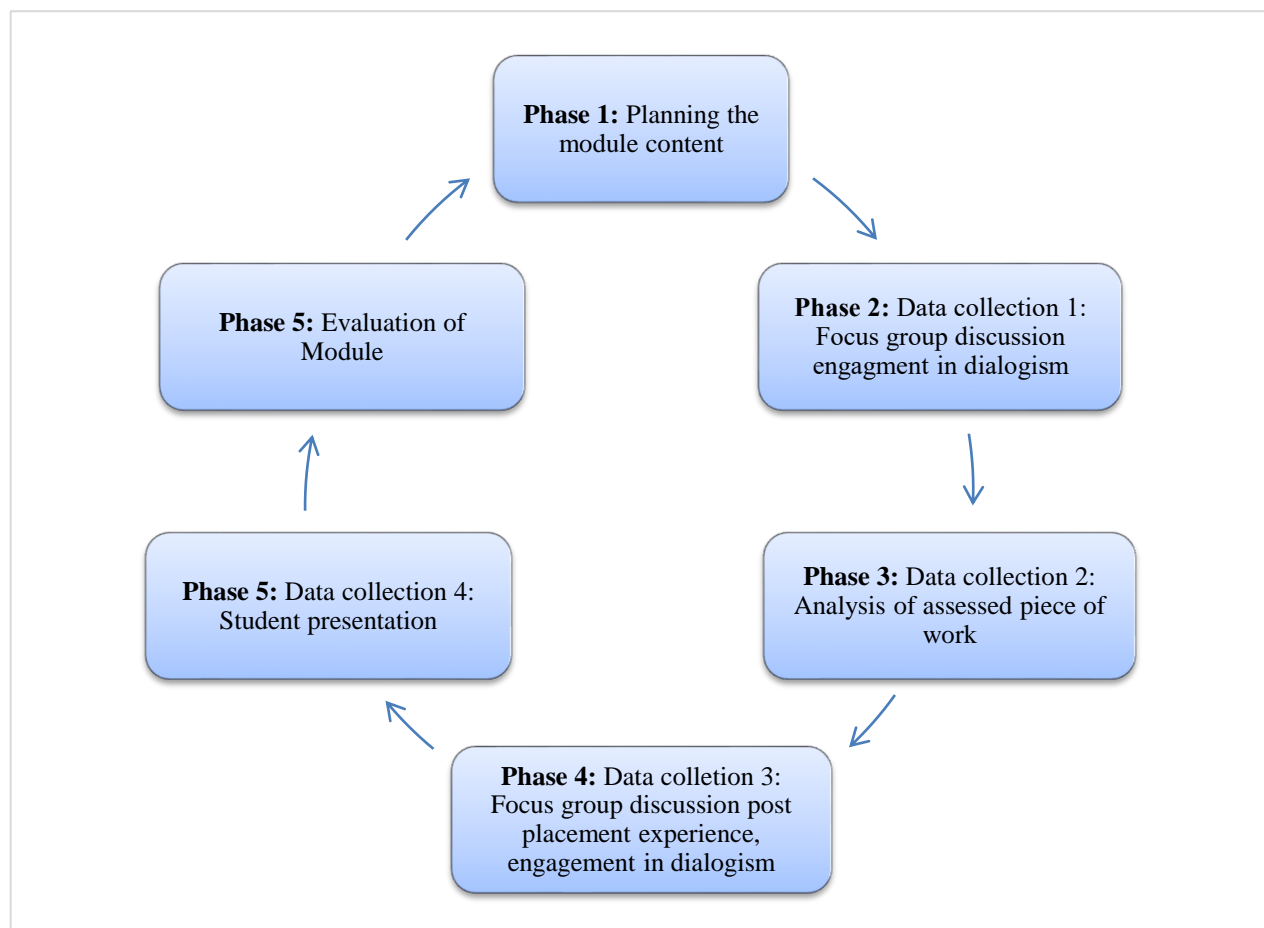
the development of their understanding of disability. This included levels of ability as they shift over time, the notion of able- bodied being a temporary state in the context of the aging process.[66] Finally it explored the debates around 'objectivising' disability and the idea of the 'hegemony of 'normalcy.'[75]

The second stage of data collection was an analysis of an assessed piece of work. The taught element of the module fed into support for the first point of assessment, an essay, which was about the significance of theory to explaining and understanding the developments in organisation and administration of disability sport.

Students then were engaged in a placement experience for the second half of the module, a wide variety of contexts were used for placements including school settings, YMCA, Special Olympics, residential centres, community settings and sports clubs. On completion of the placement a second focus group took place and formed the third source of data. The focus of this was to encourage students to critically reflect upon their own perceptions of disability and how this has been influenced by the placement experiences. It also encouraged students to reflect upon practices observed, policies underpinning such practices and how this informs and informed their own practice.

The final source of data was a second analysis of assessed work, this time a student presentation reflecting on placement experiences that required them to demonstrate a critical understanding of the nature of disabilities and the

process of adaptation and modification, in addition to the impact on their placement context of structures and classifications of disability and role of theories on disability. The research was carried out by one module tutor and one staff member who was not involved in the module. The university ethical approval processes included an explanation of the project (during which it was stressed, there was no obligation to take part), those students who agreed to participate, were asked to read and sign an informed consent form. The member of the module staff did not engage in any of the data analysis, however the process of this type of research did bring up its own challenges which will be explored later in the paper and which concern the tutor's involvement as a critical pedagogue. The data analysis process drew on Sparkes and Smith's[76] 6-phase understanding of thematic analysis as it identified, analysed, interpreted and reported themes that emerged from within the focus groups discussion, assessments, reflections and module evaluation.

In carrying out the action research, the data was explored in the context of the depth of criticality. This notion of surface and deep learning suggested by Moon[77] can evolve from different models of teaching where at the surface level descriptive and reflective conversations may take place, then more in-depth would be comparative reflective conversations than critical reflective conversations. The distinction between these types of conversations in reflective practice were identified using Jay and Johnson's[52] dimensions and guiding questions.

Table Two: Distinctions between levels of reflection: dimensions and guiding questions (Jay and Johnson, 2002: 77)

Dimension	Definition	Typical questions
Descriptive	Describe the matter for reflection	What is happening? Is it working, and for whom? For whom is it not working? How do I know? How am I feeling? What am I pleased and/or concerned about? What do I not understand? Does this relate to any of my stated goals, and to what extent are they being met?
Comparative	Reframe the matter for reflection in light of alternative views, others' perspectives, research, etc.	What are alternative views about what is happening? How do other people who are directly or indirectly involved describe and explain what is happening? What does the research contribute to an understanding of this matter? How can I improve what's not working? If there is a goal, what are some ways of accomplishing it? How do other people accomplish this goal? For each perspective and alternative, who is served and who is not?
Critical	Having considered the implications of the matter, establish a renewed perspective	What are the implications of the matter when viewed from these alternative perspectives? Given these various perspectives, their implications, and my own morals and ethics, which is best for this particular matter? What is the deeper meaning of what is happening, in terms of the public democratic purposes of schooling? What does this matter reveal about the moral and political dimension of schooling? How does this reflective process inform and renew my perspective?

Very clear from the process of action research was that in order to engender truly critically reflective students, a transformative pedagogy is needed where the process of translating critical reflection into action requires a heightened awareness of potential to act as an agent for change. The inclusion of a placement experience served to provide a context for students to take responsibility for their own learning and enable integration of prior learning.

In the focus group students explored their revised opinions, some showing a more descriptive approach to their reflections, while others moved to comparative and the reflective contributions to the discussion. Below are three examples where in the first the student describes what happens and how they know that; in the second they are considering alternatives and interpreting what is happening by reframing it; and in the final example the student has considered the implications of the matter and establish a renewed perspective.

'Many individuals with disability can cope with the management of tasks and lead an independent life, they explained to me how they adapted to manage daily activities.' (Student 8)

'I'm reflecting on aspects of disability in a different light - my view was changed significantly because a climber who was disabled by having just one hand was actually a far better climber than many of the able-bodied participants, they had learnt to overcome their disability to the extent that it did not stop them from trying new things' (Student 10)

'I was interested in the fact that society was interested in the social model of disability and it was a more realistic view of disability in comparison to the medical model, I thought the Le Clair reading broadened this up and exemplified how living in today's society impacts on this further.' (Student 1)

It was evident from the authors' research that the work placement provided an impetus for more criticality in their discourses, where the teaching of theory was illuminated by the reflection on practice and new knowledge was generated through debating mismatches in observed practice, beliefs and values. A range of reflections emerged from the assignment submitted, which required them to consider implications that emerged from their placement experiences. In the first two the students consider their experiences in relation to models of disability, and learn through problem solving and practical application.

'The placement enforced the recently established bio-social model of disability more that the medical or social model – participants didn't see themselves as disabled as they were all able to do the activities.' (Student 1: – placement experience of organising and managing a multi-sport event for a community club aimed at making sport accessible to 8-30 year olds in East Cornwall)

Through my position in the company I found that many of the service users go for the company and socialisation as much as for the experience that is gained from each department.' (Student 3: – placement in Robert Owen Communities centre Charity)

In the following examples students are involved more in reflection, which enables them to determine the necessary types of action that they should take in order to improve the life conditions of the disability groups they worked with.

'The school aims to become involved in Project Ability next year. Disabled competitive sport has been highlighted as an area of improvement by the school, so I undertook some research to explore the barriers in the school and in the community sports centre to increasing competitive opportunities for disability groups.' (Student 5: mainstream secondary school in Cornwall)

'Being disabled myself I have noticed how different disabilities need different assistants, also working with disabled adults is very different to working with disabled children as they want something different from taking part.' (Student 9: working with County Sports Partnership)

The final examples from the students' academic presentations illustrate them being active agents in their own education and to develop a critical consciousness that helps them evaluate the validity, fairness, and authority within their educational and living situations.

'Experiencing sport in a disabled-specific environment rather than as an aspect of a mainstream event showed how much more beneficial the environment was for disabled people and how much more experience they were able to gain. The event enabled disabled people to take part in competitive sporting activities in a safe and structured manner that reinforced the concept of sport for all.' (Student 2: – placement experience of organising and managing a multi-sport event for a community club aimed at making sport accessible to 8-30 year olds in East Cornwall)

'There were many rewards for the students to earn, but it could be questioned if these rewards are appreciated and why well-behaved mainstream students are not rewarded in the same way.' (Student 3: – placement experience in a 11-16 special school for emotional and social difficulties 'out and about activity' in Walsall)

The opportunities to reflect on placement experiences supports the belief that critical pedagogy should challenge conventional views of the relationship between student and teacher and involve the learners in the generation of knowledge. In the placements a number of students felt confident challenging the ways in which different environments operated, policies and practices they adopted 'I learnt from the instructors and I think they learnt from me.' (Student 10 Outdoor adventure centre) Other ways in which this manifested itself in the research carried out by the authors can be aligned to suggestions made in research about the role of the student in critical pedagogy summarised by Aliakbari and Faraji. Table three outlines key aspects of these role and examples of how this manifested itself in this case study.[78]

Engaging with a critical pedagogy can introduce particular challenges to the learner. A study by Pishghadam and Meidani found that 'While the ultimate aim of critical pedagogy is emancipation, the results revealed in this study give a rather dualistic view on this issue. Whereas some students reported how they felt empowered by learning to take a more active role in their lives, others became handicapped and perplexed by the new notions that critical theories had taught them. Thus, for some, critical pedagogy became a medium of oppression, rather than emancipation.'[79]

Table three: The role of the student in critical pedagogy

Students' role	Example from This Case Study
Active participants in that together with the teacher they correct the curricula and that they share their ideas and learn to challenge assumptions[xiv]	Focus group discussions (dialogism) theme themes emerging from these where: •Wanting to understand effects and impact on disable athletes •Societal views on disability •Cultural differences and disability •Barriers for access •Models of disability
Students contribute to curricular decisions and determine the areas of study and the associated reading materials[xv]	Key readings – at the start of the module enabled students to select topics for discussion. Then explore these from their own context e.g. the outdoors, school, coaching.
Offer good reasons for their ideas and can correct their own and others' procedures[xvi]	Poster presentation and rationale document focused on their placement experience from the perspective of key issues that formed part of module delivery – in particular, impact of legislative and policy developments, as well as an analysis of the organisation and reflection on their role in the organisation.
They should engage in social criticism in order to create a public sphere in which citizens can exercise power over their own lives and learning	Essay provided students to design context for response based on organisation and administration of inclusive physical activity programmes. In doing this, they reflected upon the relationship between the changing conceptualisations of disability.
Learners are not recipients of knowledge rather they become creators[xvii]	Module evaluations suggested that pedagogic strategies involved enabled fluid relationship between learner and teacher and enabled students to develop their own views and perceptions.

[xiv] Giroux HA. Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling. A Critical Reader. Boulder CO: West view Press; 1997.
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The evaluation of the module identified that this was evident in the research carried out by the authors. In particular when some students were asked to engage in dialogism, three students withdrew from discussion completely and two focused very much on describing what was happening and felt uncomfortable unpicking, critiquing or judging their experiences.

One way of addressing this challenge may be to introduce the idea of praxis into the teaching and learning process. Research on teaching over the past three decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth. This has been further reinforced by ETUCE who suggest that effective teaching is built 'on a concept of teaching as praxis in which theory, practice and the ability to reflect critically on one's own and others' practice illuminate each other.[80] Lather cites Buker's contention that the requirements of praxis are identified as 'theory both relevant to the world and nurtured by actions in it, and an action component in its own theorizing process that grows out of practical and political grounding.'[81] When evaluating the module it was noted that the research carried out by the authors encouraged students to be actively involved in their own education. In doing this, they sought to bridge the gap between theory and transformational action, which according to Aliakbari and Faraji is the aim of praxis in education.[82]

To support the self-creative generation of knowledge, opportunities need to be afforded to learners to learn in different 'spaces'; McArthur suggests that 'higher education needs to provide a particular combination of space; one which allows for complex ideas to be debated and generated while also linked to the wider society,'[83] to enable learning to be diverse and complex, considering new forms of knowledge and creating new ways to generate knowledge. The taught experience in this university on the module designed specifically to focus on disability sport provide one 'space' for learning. However, the university as a community provides a far bigger 'space' where disciplinary and interdisciplinary opportunities exist. Hardman and Pitchford assert that 'As students enter the increasingly competitive and consumerist higher education market place, there will be a need for academics to find ways of teaching that support good scholarship, employability and the development of global citizenship.'[84] Meaningful engagement with the community based on the development of long-term relationships presents such opportunities. However, to be truly transformational, such engagement must operate within a learning environment rooted in a critical pedagogy.

The key findings from the action research of adopting a critical pedagogy approach to teaching and learning can be clustered into three key themes: a) Implications for the students' learning experience; b) Implications for adopting this approach for academic staff teaching on the module; c) Implications for the administration of teaching and learning. For the students, the breadth of academic attainment in the module was consistent with previous years but with an increase in numbers of students achieving highest grades; the Module evaluation process suggested that there was particularly positive feedback concerning the use of visiting speakers and the contribution of the placement to the taught elements of the programme. The delivery style required students to engage in more self-directed and reflective practices drawing from the breadth of experiences offered in a wide range of different contexts (workshops, placements, seminar activities, directed tasks, readings, discussions and debates), to this end they need to be active participants in the generation of their own knowledge. The concerns around this focus on self or shared discovery is that personal opinions, values and beliefs are challenged and unless a safe and secure environment is developed to facilitate this some learners may feel ostracised or oppressed.

The implications for the academic staff delivering on the module were two-fold; firstly as researcher, secondly as module tutor. As researcher, it challenged very basic positivist assumptions about the capacity of the researcher to act in a detached and objective manner. In fact, the nature of the research required the authors to adapt their practices as the learning evolved. From the point at which they committed themselves to an investigation of the student experience on the module, the researchers began to influence the structure and content of the module and to develop a heightened awareness of what they should be seeking to achieve through the module. The implications of the pedagogic processes engaged in the module were to ensure suitable experiences were built into the design and included extending the programme of visiting speakers to involve more discussion from students about their own perceptions of disability and how this has been influenced by experiences. Requiring students to focus on their own experiences and the experiences of family members if they are to understand disability was intensely personal, and required the establishment of trust between lecturer and student. The lecturers also had to work with students and placement coordinators to embed suitable placements in the module that enabled them to engage in meaningful reflective practice and to critically evaluate ideas of physical culture as an empowering experience for people with disabilities.

Implications for administrative processes were three-fold: firstly, minor modification of the learning outcomes of the module to focus on developing practitioners capable of engaging in meaningful reflective practice; secondly, modification of assessment titles, which were about the significance of theory to explaining and understanding developments in organisation and administration of disability sport; thirdly, the generation of the established 'Learning Space' virtual learning environment to support all elements of the module, including the Edu Blog platform for reflective journaling, placement learning guidance, directed readings and tasks as well as lecture and visiting speakers' notes.

Conclusion

Castells, in his analysis of the changing role of higher education in society, argues that as well as emerging as a key actor in driving and managing scientific and technological change, the university also becomes a 'critical source of equalisation of chances and democratisation of society by making possible equal opportunities for people – this is not only a contribution to economic growth, it is a contribution to social equality ...'[85] Challenges continue to face people with disabilities living in an uncertain global environment, such as contested views on meanings attributed to inclusion, the equitable distribution of resources and the role of education in civic as well as technological and physical literacy. Consequently, universities have a central role to play in fostering attitudinal and material changes, which predicate their inclusion in society.

The paper has explored the contention in relation to the role of the university in the development of an inclusive physical and sporting culture by first considering the issue of the curriculum and promotion of intellectual debate necessary to encourage a critical pedagogy of disability and sport. The research involved taking account of the intellectual, social and emotional development of individual students and ways in which curriculum can contribute to the promotion of the civic and physical literacy, which predicate an inclusive physical culture. From there, the paper explored how these pedagogical considerations are translated in the university setting into action that is supportive of people with disabilities engaging in physical activity and sport. It took into account through action research, the experiences of a group of level six (Honours) students approaching the subject of disability sport and examined the efficacy of a variety of teaching and learning strategies designed to prepare them to facilitate inclusive sports initiatives. It

examined the role of the student placement in that process and suggested that through the process of critical reflection on practices of themselves and others, students can determine the types of action needed to affect a change in the field of disability sport. It supports suggestions by Lucas and Leng Tan that the capacity to reflect underpins professional judgements and ethical awareness and the development of academic performance is affected by placement learning as a result.[86]

From investigations of the teaching and learning process (albeit in one institutional context) and wider engagement with administrators and academics, some tentative suggestions can be made:

• An individualised approach to learning should factor the lived experience of individual students, their rationale for engagement in study and their physical and emotional investment in the process, since individual perceptions of disability and understanding of the challenges facing people living with disabilities will differ greatly from student to student.

• Programmes of study should consider carefully how a critical pedagogy is translated into effective engagement with university-based initiatives supportive of people with disabilities. While experiential learning may form part of this, its location within the programme is not a foregone conclusion since the linear movement from theory to practice does not take into account the previous experiences of students nor their capacity to grasp the intellectual debates underpinning current practices.

• Students should be aware of the relationship between the lived experience of individual athletes and global political issues that characterise competitive disability sport. Criticality should include being prepared to challenge governance issues at every level of disability sports.

In the context of structural developments:

• University sport and physical activity programmes should in themselves seek to be more inclusive of diverse student needs. The recent Sport England Activation fund provides the potential for university sport departments to engage in more inclusive practices. However, its implementation will need to be monitored carefully in this context.

• While the development of expertise in the area of disability sport requires a concentration of resources and a critical mass of intellectual capital, too much concentration

into very few universities increases the impediments to accessibility which the disability sport movement is, as an advocacy body, committed to challenge. Sharing best practices and developing provisions in regional centres where local and regional demand from individual athletes and clubs can be best served, can be part of an alternative perspective.

The challenge of working in a higher education environment driven by the neoliberal impulses of increased competition and marketization, while encouraging increased specialisation and development of expertise in areas such as sport development, can stifle co-operation across the university sector. While there are strong grounds for seeing universities as making significant progress in the promotion and development of disability sport, it may be equally argued that such progress has been part of the wider shift toward a neoliberal sporting environment within which commercial operators, sponsors and universities as competitive organizations fight for market share in the new disability sport market place. Building on the argument of civic literacy, universities have a responsibility to encourage debate concerning inclusion as an aspect of citizenship and civic values and to relate this to inclusive practices as they develop their role in community sport provision. An inclusive culture is, however, not limited to participatory sport and physical activity. Inclusive practice in sport incorporates opportunities for differently abled athletes to achieve their potential in a competitive setting and given their resourcing, networks and research agendas, a number of universities have the potential to play a leading role in this aspect of sport development. As centres for technological development, universities form an important element in the research and development, coaching programmes and infrastructure support increasingly associated with successful engagement with parasport. Universities also provide a forum for engagement in debate concerning the equitable governance of competitive international disability sport.

If universities are to serve the public good locally, regionally and globally, sharing information and expertise across the sector can provide the basis for a more accessible disability sport environment. However, such an alternative vision is predicated on the development of students (whether coach or teacher education) as critically reflective practitioners prepare to challenge established practices and explore new ways of delivery.

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