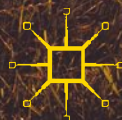


SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Critical Perspectives

Edited by

RYLEE A. DIONIGI & MICHAEL GARD



Sport and Physical Activity across the Lifespan

Rylee A. Dionigi • Michael Gard
Editors

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Critical Perspectives

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*From Rylee: To my beautiful family; Claudio, Giordano, Lorena and
Ralphie.*

From Michael: To Eimear Nora Enright; the past, the present, the future.

Foreword

It is widely acknowledged that, under specific circumstances, participation in sport and physical activity may have beneficial effects for physical and mental health, and for community and individual development. Unfortunately, the complexity implied in those 'specific circumstances' tends to be forgotten, and for the last half century policy makers have been generalising the benefits and increasingly adding functionalist baggage to the idea of participation.

As Michael Sam (2009) notes, 'Governments now have high expectations from their involvement with sport, including the prospects that it will generate economic growth, decrease health expenditures, promote social integration and develop national identity' (500). In their attempts to increase sport and physical activity participation to realise those benefits, governments have encountered a *wicked* problem. Sport and physical activity are difficult to define (ranging from full-time high-performance to occasional recreational play and exercise), and even more difficult to measure; reasons for non-participation are multi-causal, and the problem is relentless.

As a consequence, attempts to increase participation in Canada and other countries over the last 25 years have met with little success. Public service announcements have raised awareness, but not changed any of the circumstances underlying non-participation. Giving increased funds to high-performance sport so that the success of athletes will 'inspire' others

to participate appears to have had an opposite effect; the prescriptive and health-related physical activity guidelines for various age groups have been widely ignored, and attempts to use tax credits to increase participation have been a singular failure.

Dionigi and Gard have begun to address this issue directly in this important new collection of critical research on participation in sport and physical activity. They have brought together scholars from a number of countries to consider participation in sport and physical activity at various stages of the lifespan and all of the scholars have addressed the multi-causal aspects of participation by recognising that age intersects with other social categories (e.g., social class, gender, Indigeneity and sexuality) and circumstances of life (e.g., disability, parenthood and pregnancy) to produce the conditions under which people feel able, or not, to participate in sport and physical activity. The authors also note the influence of early twenty-first century structural circumstances in many societies, such as growing inequality, downloading of responsibility for health to individuals and increasing privatisation/commercialisation of sport and physical activity opportunities.

In these circumstances, it may be interpreted as rational to choose not to participate, especially given the ways that sport (as a highly competitive ranking system) and physical activity (as a morally superior form of bodily comparison) are often presented and represented. This collection of work should help to drive the debate, and to set a direction for future research, policy and practice.

Toronto, Canada

Peter Donnelly
31 May 2017

Reference

Sam, M. (2009). The public management of sport: Wicked problems, challenges and dilemmas. *Public Management Review*, 11(4): 499–514.

Preface

Immerse yourself in an array of theoretical and methodologically diverse perspectives on Sport for All and health-related policy trajectories from contributors who reside in Australia, Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and parts of Europe. We aim to stimulate and support the critical thinking needs of students in exercise or sport science, sociology, psychology, ageing, leisure studies, physical activity and health promotion, and physical education-related degrees (at the upper graduate or postgraduate levels). Our book will also be of particular interest to scholars in the fields of sociology of sport, sociology of ageing, physical education, exercise and health psychology, and leisure studies. Other fields that would benefit from this book include public policy studies, health and physical activity promotion and governmentality studies, as well as critical public health studies.

Researchers of sport and ageing across the countries listed above will find this edited collection useful because it brings the latest research and insights together, legitimising sport studies as it relates to age, life transitions, life extension and other intersecting factors such as class, gender, sexuality, disability, Indigeneity and family dynamics. Overall, it highlights the important contribution that social scientists can make to knowledge on individual and cultural implications of promoting Sport

for All across the lifespan. We encourage you to question the relevance of sport in policy, critique the potential consequences of imposing sport and physical activity participation across all age groups, and reflect on how words and actions can impact individuals and societies.

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Thank you to my parents Ken and Jan Leslight, for your love, understanding and support, regardless of which unstoppable freight train I am riding at the time, and to my sister Mardi and my brother Ian and their beautiful families, for listening to me talk too much, for your empathy, love, good times and support.

Without my family to love, feed, accept, humour and play with me, there would be no book. To my incredible Lorena (Reni), even at 11-years-old your insightfulness, sense of social justice and critical mind help to keep me grounded. Not to mention, your musical, literary, artistic and

athletic talents and determination are inspiring! Thank you for always being there for me and for truly understanding me. To my gorgeous G-man, Giordano, your sense of humour, wit and compassion are a constant reminder of the good in this world. Thank you for playing sappy love songs on your trumpet just for me and for your honest critical feedback as my basketball coach. Your soccer, science and mathematical skills are beyond your 11 years of age. Thanks to Ralphie, my fantastic little dog (who has lovingly assumed the role of my third ‘baby’) for being by my side, on my lap, at my feet or within view while playing in the backyard as I completed this book. Finally, thank you to my husband (my darling, my rock, my soulmate), Claudio, who has always supported me throughout my academic career. Thank you for helping me to better understand the world I live in and for loving me unconditionally. *La profondità delle tue conoscenze ed il tuo amore sono senza uguali!* I love you forever.

Michael Gard: Strewth! I’m still alive. How do I start to thank those people who gave me so much? Well, I have to briefly tell the story. About 18 months ago, I was bicycling in Yamba, where my dad lives, when a car collided with me. I went flying, was knocked out, acquired a tripod facial fracture, went into and out of the hospital, and then had stroke at my dad’s place. It’s a long journey back from a stroke.

I want to thank all those medical and health professionals who have helped me on this journey. I was treated at Maclean, Lismore, Grafton, Gold Coast and Princess Alexandra (PA) Hospitals.

A special mention to Dr Bailey at the Gold Coast Hospital, the Geriatric and Rehabilitation Unit (GARU) staff at the PA, including Stephanie, Katherine, Lisa, and all those who cared for me in my ward upstairs. I also met many patients along the way who were dealing with injuries (and illnesses) much worse than mine. My thanks to them too for their company and inspiration.

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Contents

1	Sport for All Ages? Weighing the Evidence	1
	<i>Rylee A. Dionigi and Michael Gard</i>	
Part I	Setting the Context: Sport Participation and Sport Policy	21
2	Sport Participation across the Lifespan: Australian Trends and Policy Implications	23
	<i>Rochelle M. Eime and Jack T. Harvey</i>	
3	Diversity in Participation Reigns, Policy Challenges Ahead: Sport for All (Ages) from a European Perspective	45
	<i>Jeroen Scheerder, Hanne Vandermeersch, and Koen Breedveld</i>	
4	From a Lucky Few to the Reluctant Many: Interrogating the Politics of Sport for All	67
	<i>Michael Gard, Rylee A. Dionigi, and Claudio Dionigi</i>	

Part II	Early Childhood, Youth and Sport	91
5	Tykes and ‘Timbits’: A Critical Examination of Organized Sport Programs for Preschoolers	93
	<i>Jessica Fraser-Thomas and Parissa Safai</i>	
6	An Uneven Playing Field: Talent Identification Systems and the Perpetuation of Participation Biases in High Performance Sport	117
	<i>Nick Wattie and Joseph Baker</i>	
7	Girls’ Presentations of Self in Physical Culture: A Consideration of Why Sport is Not Always the Answer	135
	<i>Eimear Enright</i>	
8	‘At-Risk’ Youth Sport Programmes: Another Way of Regulating Boys?	155
	<i>Rachael Hutchesson, Rylee A. Dionigi, and Kristina Gottschall</i>	
9	Sport is Not for All: The Transformative (Im)possibilities of Sport for Young Disabled People	175
	<i>Hayley Fitzgerald</i>	
Part III	Sport in Adulthood	193
10	Adult Sport Participation and Life Transitions: The Significance of Childhood and Inequality	195
	<i>David Haycock and Andy Smith</i>	

11	Sport for All, or Fit for Two? Governing the (In)active Pregnancy	211
	<i>Shannon Jette</i>	
12	The Role of Sport in the Lives of Mothers of Young Children	227
	<i>Katherine E. Soule</i>	
13	The Gay Games, Safe Spaces and the Promotion of Sport for All?	245
	<i>Chelsea Litchfield and Jaquelyn Osborne</i>	
Part IV	Sport in Mid-life and Old Age	261
14	Doing ‘More for Adult Sport’: Promotional and Programmatic Efforts to Offset Adults’ Psycho-social Obstacles	263
	<i>Bradley W. Young and Bettina Callary</i>	
15	The Mid-life ‘Market’ and the Creation of Sporting Sub-cultures	283
	<i>Rylee A. Dionigi and Chelsea Litchfield</i>	
16	Outdoor Adventurous Sport: For All Ages?	301
	<i>Elizabeth C.J. Pike</i>	
17	Sport, Physical Activity, and Aging: Are We on the Right Track?	317
	<i>Kelly Carr, Kristy Smith, Patricia Weir, and Sean Horton</i>	
	Index	347

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	Sport participation trends and determinants across the lifespan	26
Fig. 2.2	Age-specific participation rates, 2015, Victoria	27
Fig. 3.1	The church model of sport	48
Fig. 3.2	Weekly sport participation by age in the EU27 for 2009 and 2013, in percentages	54
Fig. 3.3	Weekly sport participation by age and country cluster in the EU28 for 2013, in percentages	56
Fig. 3.4	Club sport participation by age and country cluster in the EU28 for 2013, in percentages	57
Fig. 7.1	The things that are important to me (Debra)	142
Fig. 7.2	Where I spend my leisure time (Shelly)	148

List of Tables

Table 3.1	Sport participation by age group in EU28, in percentages	53
Table 17.1	Psychological and social factors identified within lay-based definitions of successful aging	321

1

Sport for All Ages? Weighing the Evidence

Rylee A. Dionigi and Michael Gard

We will begin by introducing the scope, focus and content of this scholarly edited volume on critical perspectives of sport and physical activity promotion and participation across the lifespan. We are particularly interested in the intersections of age, life stage/transition (early childhood, youth, adulthood, middle-age, old age) and sport, as well as the ways sport and age intersect with class, gender, sexuality, ability, family dynamics and/or race in the developed world. Ageing is often a forgotten dimension in critical sport studies and most texts dedicated to sport across the lifespan are written from developmental, behavioural and/or medical science perspectives with an uncritical acceptance of the dominant “sport is good for all” agenda (e.g., Meyer and Gullotta 2012; Talbot and Holt 2011; Weiss 2004). Alternatively, we provide insights from sociology, education, leisure studies and psychosocial areas, as

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well as examine emerging age groups in sport (such as toddlers and the oldest of the old). We understand ageing as a complex social, emotional, biological and universal process—we are all ageing and each of us experience it in our own way. Not since McPherson's (1986) edited collection has there been a book dedicated to sport and ageing across the life cycle. Like us, McPherson (1994: 329) 'emphasizes that aging is a lifelong social process leading to diverse lifestyles in middle and later adulthood, that there is considerable heterogeneity in physical and social experiences and capacities within and between age cohorts...' We also acknowledge that 'we age within a social structure whereby unique cultural, historical, political, economic, or environmental factors impinge on different age groups, at different times, and often in different ways depending on their stage in the life cycle' (McPherson 1994: 330). The critical approach we take in this book opens up unique ways of thinking about sport and ageing, and draws our attention to the potential for questionable policies and practices. 'It requires a look beyond the immediate, to question that which we take for granted and seek connections between seemingly disparate ideas: it is an approach that nurtures creativity ... with an eye toward social change' (Swaminathan and Mulvihill 2017: 4–5).

Sport and physical activity cannot not be clearly defined because how we understand them is always changing depending upon cultural norms, leisure trends and policy directions. Different countries use different terms, such as physical culture in the United Kingdom, health and physical education (HPE) in Australia or exercise in the United States. Often 'sport' and 'physical activity', as well as the previously mentioned terms, are conflated in policy, everyday language and academic writing. For the purposes of this edited collection, and given that its contributors are from different countries, we have asked chapter authors to explain how they are defining their usage of sport, physical activity, physical education, exercise, leisure and/or physical culture in cases where their definitions may not be clear to the reader. While we accept that any definition of sport is contentious and open to interpretation, if a definition is not provided by chapter authors, the reader can assume that they are using the following understandings of sport, physical activity and/or physical education:

- Sport: 'A human activity involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through

organisations and is generally recognised as a sport' (Australian Government 2011: 7). In this definition, 'sport' has three elements—competition, rules and organisations (i.e., governing bodies) that distinguish it from similar looking physical activities or informal 'social sport' (see https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/knowledge_base/sport_participation/Sport_a_new_fit/what_is_sport). The latter, informal or social sport, is also important to this book as it includes a collection of individuals who may meet somewhere (e.g., a street, park, sports field or court or backyard) and enter into a game of cricket, rugby, football, basketball or handball. It is considered informal, recreational or 'social':

... because the element of organisational supervision is minimal, but [it is still] 'sport' because the elements of competition (albeit the friendly nature of such competition) and rules are present. If the same group of individuals were registered in a football club and trained/played in an organised and structured competition under the supervision of a referee; they would be engaged in 'organised sport'. In each case the individuals may perform the same skills, produce the same physical exertion, and may realise the same personal benefits (e.g., health, fitness, personal satisfaction, etc.) (see https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/knowledge_base/sport_participation/Sport_a_new_fit/what_is_sport).

Both informal/social and formal/organised sport are ultimately examples of mass sport participation and are therefore relevant to this edited collection.

- Physical activity: physically active recreation or leisure, that is, activities 'engaged in for the purpose of relaxation, health and wellbeing or enjoyment with the primary activity requiring physical exertion, and the primary focus on human activity' (Australian Government 2011: 7).
- Physical education: school-based sports, fitness and health-related physical activities, fine and gross motor skill-based physical activities and any other physical activity completed during one's schooling years (primary/elementary school, high school, etc.)

It is important to note that our definitions of sport and physical activity were adopted from the *National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework* (Australian Government 2011: 7) because it:

... is a guide for government activity and resource allocation. It provides a mechanism for engaging the whole sport and recreation industry in the achievement of national goals for sport and active recreation. It also sets out the agreed roles and responsibilities of governments and expectations of sport and active recreation system partners.

Therefore, this framework guides Australia's sport policy environment and it is similar to other countries who have adopted a Sport for All concept. For example, to the European Union (2001), "Sport" means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels' (see https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016804c9dbb).

Background to This Edited Volume

The Sport for All idea was first launched by the Council of Europe in 1966. In 1975 the European Sport for All Charter was established (Van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2008). Sport for All endorses the idea that 'the practice of sport is a human right' and implies that sport *should* be practised by all (IOC, Olympic Charter 2013: 11). However, the implementation, awareness and implications of this concept across other Western countries, such as North America, the United Kingdom and Australia, are in their infancy. The traditional focus in these countries has been on the elite sport model. Notably, sport policy's dual objectives of encouraging mass participation through Sport for All and achieving elite success through funding high performance in sport are in constant tension (Sam 2009). Our interest lies in the growth over the past 40–50 years in the number and variety of sporting programmes and events, catering for both the very young and the very old, which highlight the trend towards promoting sport for all across the lifespan.

Organised sport is being catered for and promoted to people of any age; from children as young as 16 months to adults up to and above 100 years of age. In fact, something of a symbiotic consensus has emerged between public officials, who often see sport participation as a cost-effective policy solution to a rainbow of social problems, and researchers eager to support and capitalise on prevailing sentiments about the value of sport (Coakley 2015; Gard and

Dionigi 2016; Sam 2009). In some renderings of the issue, for example, sport emerges as a relatively cheap, universally appropriate and side-effect free remedy for keeping toddlers occupied, addressing social alienation amongst the young, ill-health amongst the elderly and obesity for everyone. For example, the North American ‘Sportball Kids Sports Programs’ franchise claims that it:

... offers kids multi-sport programs in Canada, including children’s soccer, T-ball and ball hockey for toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged kids in locations across Canada. Our non-competitive sports classes for kids are play-based programs designed to improve fitness for children from toddlers ages 1 to 3 years old up to young children ages 3 to 5 years old and 5 to 12 years old.

Whether you’re looking for fun activities for kids, kids’ birthday party ideas or sports camps for children, our trained children’s sports coaches will keep the ball in play! (<https://www.sportball.ca/>)

At the other end of the age spectrum, ‘The International Masters Games Association is the representative body of sport masters worldwide. It promotes lifelong competition, friendship and understanding between mature sportspeople, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, or sport status’, through multi-sport festivals such as the World Masters Games (see www.imga.ch). It is founded on and promotes the Sport for All philosophy of the Olympic Charter.

Many of these ‘grass-roots’ sporting opportunities are grounded in Healthy Lifestyles/Active Living or Active Ageing policy agendas which reflect the current push for physical activity participation as a means of maintaining health across the lifespan and reducing the burden of chronic disease (e.g., Australian Sports Commission 2015; van Uffelen et al. 2015). In other words, Sport for All and Sport for Life (Canadian Sport for Life 2011) philosophies are being used to promote mass sport and physical activity participation across the lifespan as part of wider health promotion trajectories (World Health Organization 2002). For example, since the 1990s, Active Ageing policies which include the promotion of sport and physical activity in later life have become more prominent (Lassen and Moreira 2014; Moulaert and Biggs 2013; World Health Organization 2015), forming what could arguably be seen as an anti-ageing agenda (Pike 2011; Tulle 2008). These policy developments raise a range of moral and ethical issues, such as the shaping of ideas about “appropriate” ways to

age (e.g., see Gard et al. 2017) and the responsibility of people for their own health, regardless of their circumstances (see Dionigi 2017).

While it is recognised that grass-roots sport participation has many physical, mental and social benefits for individuals and society (see Baker et al. 2010; Dionigi et al. 2011; Eime et al. 2013a, b, Gayman et al. 2017; Geard et al. *in press*), in reality:

- sport is not accessible to everyone (and never will be) for many reasons, which vary according to age;
- sport is not the interest of many people who have access to it; they choose to do other things at various life points;
- current attempts to promote mass sport participation and increase physical activity levels across the lifespan have not proven to be successful, at any age;
- the “Sport for All across the lifespan” ideal is being exploited and taken up by different groups in different ways.

Therefore, individual needs, life stage, social structures and social systems of differentiation must be researched and understood to inform policy directions related to sport and ageing. To date, such social structures and influences have been largely ignored in the promotion of sport across the lifespan.

Aims and Scope of This Book

It is timely, therefore, to take stock of this orthodoxy in social and public health policy and consider alternative perspectives. While there has been some critical scholarly engagement with the sport-as-social-policy agenda in the research literature this century (da Costa and Miragaya 2002; Eichberg 2010; Nicholson et al. 2010), these have yet to be presented in a single edited volume which treats the human lifespan as its central organising concern. Our book focusses on the individual and social implications of organised sport and physical activity promotion and mass sport participation across the lifespan, from recreational to elite and local to international levels. Our book does not, however, focus on the emerging phenomenon of eSports, despite its growing popularity and commercialisation (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Seo 2013). The gaming world of eSports, that is,

electronic sports, virtual sports, cybersports, competitive computer gaming or video game playing, has evolved from the arcades in the 1980s and 1990s to the Internet era to become an effective spectator sport, as well as attracting high participant numbers (Lee and Schoensted 2011) and becoming an official university/varsity sport in some athletic departments (see Jenny et al. 2017). For instance, the 2008 World Cyber Games in Germany attracted ‘approximately 800 gamers from 78 countries ... [and] several countries have begun regular televising of eSports games through both regional network channels and national broadcasting companies’ (Lee and Schoensted 2011: 39). By 2013, it was reported that one popular eSport Championship (League of Legends, a fantasy combat strategy game) attracted approximately 8.5 million online viewers (Jenny et al. 2017). In 2014, two higher education institutions in the United States offered scholarships to collegiate “gamers” or “eSports athletes” and in one case, over \$500,000 in these “athletic” scholarships were given to its students (Jenny et al. 2017).

Drawing on the work of social researchers from around the Western world, our book deals with the intersections between public policy and human biographies. While there is less attention given to the experience of elite sportsmen and women, some chapters do draw attention to the way elite sporting organisations and structures are used to promote mass participation (e.g., Wattie and Baker). Before we present the key question being addressed in this collection, we must situate it within its global context. The contributions to this book are written from the perspectives of academics who live in developed countries, namely, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Belgium. We acknowledge that the emphasis and value such Western countries place on sport is not shared (and often critiqued) by developing countries (see Jarvie and Thornton 2013; Whannel 2008). For example, high income countries, such as the United States and England, are often criticised for using sport, among other things, as a means to keeping their high status position in the world (see Beck 2004; Boyle and Haynes 2009). Western nations are also guilty of projecting absolutist and relativist views towards sport, as argued by Jarvie (2006: 177):

... if the countries of the North cease automatically to impose their own ideas on the rest of the sporting world and start to take due cognisance of other sporting cultures in a common exercise of critical self-examination, the aspirations of global sport may become more just and less charitable.

Therefore, from a cultural standpoint, our book is admittedly insular. Other texts have addressed the perspectives of scholars from non-Western countries (e.g., Amara 2005; Andrews and Carrington 2013). We acknowledge, however, that such perspectives could teach ‘First World’ nations a lot about the meaning of sport and ageing.

Through problematising dominant Sport for All, and related Sport for Life, Active Ageing or Active Lifestyle/Healthy Living policy directions, from a First World perspective, each chapter addresses the following question: What are the implications of promoting “Sport for All ages”? This question is addressed in the context of particular life stages and intersecting social, cultural and economic factors. Examples include sport for preschoolers, young mothers, older people and youth considered ‘at-risk’ of dropping out of school. Therefore, in addressing this overall question, each contributor to this edited volume considers one, all, or a combination of, the following sub-questions:

1. How does age/life stage/life transition affect the way people think about and/or relate to sport?
2. What are the impacts of sport on people at particular life points?
3. How do sport policy discourses and related practices shape certain ideas about ageing/life stage/life transition and vice versa?
4. What are the ways in which (and reasons why) sport is *not* part of people’s lives at a certain age/life stage/life transition?

In addressing the above questions, meanings of ageing (including contested terms such as successful ageing, active ageing and healthy ageing) and definitions of the lifespan may vary according to the lens used by the author/s of each chapter.

These questions (and the following arguments) that frame our book align with our view that ageing is a lifelong social process that must be understood from a lifespan perspective. This perspective recognises how the wider socio-political-economic-cultural context of the time can influence individuals and sub-groups from one stage of life to another, by either fostering or constraining opportunities to experience leisure pursuits such as sport and physical activity (Dionigi 2015; McPherson 1984, 1994). For instance, social movements (e.g., the fitness boom, feminism, and the Depression), historical community events, life experiences,

beliefs, values and roles of individuals and generations at various life points, as well as social attributes (ascribed, e.g., gender and race; and achieved, e.g., income and education), shape people's life chances and lifestyles, thereby fostering inequities (real or imagined) across the lifespan (McPherson 1994). Overall, the contributing authors of this text acknowledge the interactive effects of individual needs, life stage and social structure, consistent with a lifespan approach to ageing.

Our collection is distinctive because it provides a critical social science perspective on Sport for All that is age focussed. That is, the book intends to entice debate about Sport for All and related health promotion campaigns in the context of life stages and intersecting factor/s by discussing the consequences of this policy agenda for individuals and society. This overall aim is broken down into four arguments that we see as capturing what we mean by "critical perspectives" in the context of a book about sport and physical activity across the lifespan:

Argument 1: "Sport for All ages" is a laudable goal because of the benefits it can offer individuals and society, but systemic changes are necessary to make sport more accessible and inclusive to all.

Argument 2: "Sport for All ages" is being used as a strategy for marketing and/or regulating certain groups of the population, such as at-risk youth, inactive children and active, financially comfortable retirees.

Argument 3: Regardless of sport's benefits and how sport is promoted, it is often a place where like-minded, middle-class, already active people gather.

Argument 4: Sport is not a desire for all, so why should sport be positioned as an imperative for all age groups? For example, some people and groups actively resist the Sport for All ideal.

The author/s of each chapter handle this critique of Sport for All and related health promotion trajectories across the lifespan in different ways, as articulated below and indicated in each respective chapter. Therefore, as a whole, this collection asks readers to weigh the evidence and consider: What kinds of *other* ideas does Sport for All allow us to entertain and think in relation to age groups? What kinds of questionable practices does the presumption of Sport for All across the lifespan help to facilitate? What are some unintended and perhaps unforeseen consequences of Sport for All?

Structure and Content

In the opening section, Part I: Setting the Context: Sport Participation and Sport Policy, Chaps. 2 and 3 cover important empirical terrain across Australia and Europe, respectively, while Chap. 4 describes the theoretical and political motivations for the book. In other words, these three chapters are deliberately quite different. In this first chapter, we provide a synopsis of the overall mission of the book and outline its structure and contributions.

Next, Eime and Harvey (Chap. 2) provide a snapshot of Australian sport participation trends and determinants across the lifespan, including how sport participation is different across males and females at various life stages, as well as how participation in sport is affected by socio-economic status, cost of participation, geographic location, access to sports programmes and facilities and individual skill or competency. The chapter focusses on participation rates across four different life stages: children; adolescents; adults; and older adults, and discusses these trends in the context of Australian sport policy. Eime and Harvey show that sport policy influences sport participation and the current patterns of sport participation influence sport policy, which are key aims of their ongoing *Sport and Recreation Spatial* research project.

Scheerder, Vandermeerschen and Breedveld (Chap. 3) examine data on sport participation in Europe to show that there is both a geographical and social divide in sport participation across the lifespan. In particular, the practice of sport is higher in Scandinavian countries where Sport for All policies have priority and social inequality in terms of sport participation is minimal. Given that the level of sport participation in Europe remains grounded in social differentiation and inequality, they conclude that the effect of Sport for All policy on changing participation rates is limited. Their findings point to the importance of establishing social equity *before* promoting (or expecting) Sport for All across the lifespan.

Gard and Dionigi (Chap. 4) provide the theoretical and political foundations of this book by charting how sport has historically been recruited to solve a wide range of social policy problems. They argue that in the current Western environment, sport has been radically medicalised as a policy instrument and is emerging as a vehicle for economic growth and the management of young and older people's behaviour. As well as describing these policy developments, they interrogate the cultural and empirical grounds

upon which these disparate policies appear to rest. Gard and Dionigi also draw connections between the discursive rise of Sport for All and apparent declines in club sport participation. Given the declaration of sport as a human right, their interest is on the enduringly political deployment of sport as a social policy instrument. Above all, what appears to be the main difference between past and present sport policies, and therefore the thing most worthy of explanation, is their increasing discursive ambition to regulate the lives of all citizens, regardless of age or social circumstance.

From here on, the book is divided into parts roughly corresponding to different age groups: sport in early childhood and youth, sport in adulthood and sport in mid-life and old age. Part II, Early Childhood, Youth and Sport (Chaps. 5–9), focusses on sport for preschoolers, young elite athletes and youth considered ‘at-risk’. It demonstrates the (ir)relevance of sport across a diverse range of young people, including Indigenous Australian boys, Canadian toddlers and Irish teenage girls. Fraser-Thomas and Safai (Chap. 5) draw on the perceptions of preschoolers, their parents and childcare providers to examine the experiences of sport in early childhood. They highlight the benefits and challenges, as well as question the relevance, of sport for preschoolers in a Canadian context. They make recommendations for programming based on their data and caution that parents buying into the “sport as good” ideal provides fertile ground for sport-based businesses to exploit parents and children for financial gain.

While most chapters in our edited volume focus on mass sport participation, Wattie and Baker (Chap. 6) discuss elite athlete development. They problematise early talent identification and development in elite youth sport and discuss how relative age effects, birthplace effects and socioeconomic status widen the gap between those likely to succeed in high level sport and those not. From a North American perspective, they argue that these systemic biases in sport talent identification and development are reinforced across the lifespan, thus Sport for All is unrealised in the context of high performance sport.

In contrast to Chap. 6, Chaps. 7 (Enright) and 8 (Hutchesson, Dionigi and Gottschall) show how sport may not be relevant for some teenage girls (Chap. 7) or can be used as a form of false hope for ‘at-risk’ boys (Chap. 8). Enright uses photovoice (i.e., photos taken and discussed by the participants themselves), within a dramaturgical framework (Goffman 1959), to reveal intimate ‘backstage’ details and images of how five Irish teenage girls experi-

ence their body, physical activity and physical education. Hutchesson, Dionigi and Gottschall use ethnographic data on a community-based youth sport programme in regional Australia to argue that such programmes reinforce the need for (self-)regulation among youth (particularly Indigenous boys) and position sport, rather than educational success, as a 'way out' of social marginalisation for 'at-risk' boys. This process, Hutchesson et al. argue, can produce an attraction to certain aspects of being a young person 'at-risk'. Combined, Chaps. 6 and 7 highlight that sport is not a desire for all young people, with some people and groups (e.g., Irish teenage girls and Australian Aboriginal boys) actively resisting the Sport for All ideals and using sport (and/or their rejection of it) as a means of risk-taking and/or self-expression.

The focus then shifts to the experiences of young people with disabilities. Fitzgerald (Chap. 9) critiques the Sport for All mantra in the United Kingdom by emphasising the possibilities and impossibilities regarding transforming sport for people with disabilities. Fitzgerald discusses enduring issues that reinforce exclusion, separation and the valuing of certain body types in sport, as well as the potential for young disabled people to create change in the way sport is delivered, practised and structured.

Part III examines sport in adulthood across Chaps. 10–13. In the first chapter of this part, Haycock and Smith (Chap. 10) argue that adult sport participation is largely determined by socio-economic propensities established in childhood, educational experience throughout one's life and the level of social inequality in the country in question. Therefore, they claim, Sport for All as a policy goal will not be realised across the United Kingdom while income, wealth and health inequalities remain, similar to claims made by Scheerder, Vandermeersch and Breedveld from a European perspective in Chap. 3.

In Chap. 11, Jette (from the United States of America) places the pregnant exerciser and/or athlete within the broader social context of its time. She argues that conflicting and growing cultural anxieties about the pregnant exerciser throughout history have resulted in the emergence of medical guidelines and policies intent on prescribing 'appropriate' levels of movement to guarantee the ideal health of the unborn child, rather than ensuring access to and enjoyment of physical activity or sport for pregnant women. Jette highlights that ignoring 'the politically charged nature of exercise advice provided to pregnant women' might prevent women from engaging in activities of choice or, alternatively, might push them to

engage in activities in which they do not wish to participate. In other words, a lack of consideration of the political context ultimately serves to limit the (in)activities in which expectant mothers feel they are allowed to engage, placing unnecessary pressure upon them to be 'fit for two'.

Next, in Chap. 12, Soule explains how pressures related to sport can change when one becomes a mother of young children, such as the expectation of mothers to give up their individual pursuits and instead focus on the child/ren's needs. On the one hand, children have been positioned as a constraint to a mother's leisure, including sport and physical activity participation. On the other hand, from a relational perspective, both mother and child can enjoy sport and exercise together. Soule examines the competing discourses surrounding mothers, children, family, sport, leisure etc. and argues for 'greater openness' when examining the role of sport (or not) in the lives of mothers. In particular, she describes a summer holiday programme run by the University of California, United States that goes against the assumption that mothers want childcare facilities at sites of activity or personal fitness, and instead offers structured family physical activity days where mothers and children play sport together.

In Chap. 13, Litchfield and Osborne examine the sub-culture of the Gay Games which was created in the early 1980s for adult gay and lesbian-identified athletes to participate in sports, supposedly free from sexual discrimination. While their analysis of the experiences of Australian lesbian-identified hockey and soccer players found that the Gay Games provides an affirming space for a number of participants, a deeper critique reveals that the Games are not accessible to all. The entrance fee, cost per sport, as well as the travel expenses to attend the Games are substantial and not everyone from different gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities attend such events. Consequently, a large percentage of participants at the Gay Games are white, gay, middle-class men from developed nations, particularly the United States, with an average age of around late 30s to early 40s. The authors argue that these events are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, especially in relation to class, cultural politics, sexuality and gender.

Part IV (Chaps. 14–17) focusses on sport in mid-life and old age, with the former being a largely unexplored life stage in terms of participant experiences, despite most Masters athletes, and many running or walking enthusiasts or gym-goers, being aged in their 40s and 50s. In Chap. 14, Young and Callary claim that more adults are likely to take up sport if it is made more

appealing and accessible to middle-aged and older people through effective programming, relevant promotional messages and tailored coaching. From a Canadian (and psychosocial) perspective, they discuss the methodological limitations on research into Masters sport, the need for a coaching curriculum to meet the specific needs of older athletes and ways to address informational and programming barriers to sport recruitment among adults. Young and Callary are essentially proposing that more adults could play sport than currently do and that we need to find new ways to make this happen, which indicates that they believe adult sport participation is a health imperative for all who are able and willing. On the other hand, while Dionigi and Litchfield (Chap. 15) agree that sport participation in mid-life has many benefits, they see sport as just another option for adults, among the many other lifestyle options available to individuals as they age.

From a critical sociological perspective, Dionigi and Litchfield consider the broader question of what does the promotion and programming of sport to mature adults say about ageing and what we value (or do not value) in a sporting context, specifically, and in society, generally? In contrast to Young and Callary, Dionigi and Litchfield believe that multi-sport Masters Games events, like the Pan Pacific Masters Games or the World Masters Games, may not be the best way to encourage adults to embrace sport as a leisure option in mid-later life because such events can be economically and socially exclusive. Dionigi and Litchfield focus on the increased commodification of large-scale Masters events and the emergence of various sub-cultures within the Masters sport movement (e.g., sport party-goers, sport travellers and performance-oriented athletes). The authors show the ways in which the Sport for All and Healthy Lifestyles ideals (which justified the establishment of the Masters movement) are not reflected in many Masters sport participant practices, yet these same ideals are being manipulated by the market to pander to the already-privileged middle-aged adult.

Chapters 16 (Pike) and 17 (Carr et al.) offer insight into sport participation in old age. Pike examines the 'everyday ageing' experiences of older adult outdoor adventure sport participants (e.g., mountaineering, open water sports) in the context of policy changes in the United Kingdom. Pike explains how the traditional deficit and heroic models of ageing are simultaneously ageist and largely irrelevant when considering the provision of sport and physical activities for the ageing population. She calls for policy-makers to listen to the voices and experiences of older people to

better understand economic, social and cultural constraints which impact on late-life involvement in outdoor adventurous activities.

Chapter 17 by Carr et al. provides a fitting conclusion to this edited volume through their critical assessment of how we are faring when it comes to the promotion of sport and physical activity to older people. Consistent with a key theme of this edited collection, Carr et al. provide evidence that well-intended policies and programmes, such as the promotion of sport and physical activity across the lifespan, can be hijacked in practice and have unforeseen consequences for individuals and society. They highlight the discrepancy between the World Health Organization's inclusive and fair intentions regarding active engagement in later life and the reality of policy agendas embedded in Sport for All, Sport for Life (in Canada) and Active Ageing movements. To be effective, the authors argue, such policies must become better aligned with individual needs, desires, living conditions and the everyday realities of being an older person in contemporary Western society. Carr et al. conclude that messages focussing on meaningful engagements across the lifespan, regardless of the activity, may prove more beneficial for the ageing population than a heavy focus on physical activity.

Weighing the Evidence

In summary, this timely volume questions conventional wisdom on the benefits of promoting sport and physical activity across the lifespan. It calls on all of us to weigh up the emerging and conflicting evidence on this topic and reflect on our thoughts, words and actions as researchers, practitioners and humans who are ageing. We must recognise if and when our good intentions, including aiming to assist people to improve their health, become bad ideas. History is full of examples of inventors, pioneers, scientists and/or world leaders who began their research and ideas for good reasons and who thought what they were promoting was “good for all”. However, we all know that many of these well-intentioned ideas, such as the development of a chemical (Agent Orange) to speed up the growth of soybeans, the discovery of nuclear fusion (the basis of a hydrogen bomb) out of curiosity about the structure of an atom's nucleus and the development of ecstasy as a by-product of research to combat abnormal bleeding, had dire consequences for individuals and society.

We need to ask ourselves if our actions are indeed working against or prejudicing the very people we are claiming to help. For instance, the promotion of sport to older people actually says that we do not value diverse ways of ageing and we do not want people to get old because we want them to remain youthful and fit—when does it stop? Using sport to manage the lives of toddlers not only has an inherent profit motive, but implies that the play of children as young as 12 months old must be organised by adults and limited to rules, skills and structure. Sport as a tool for “character building” among Aboriginal youth actually says that we must use sport to change who they are because we do not value Indigenous cultures or ways of life.

To us, the question that needs addressing in regard to health and ageing is: how can we enhance the conditions in which people live to empower and enable them to make choices that address their health needs? From this perspective, all the important epidemiological and experimental studies that show being more physically active and less sedentary has health implications, although helpful in other ways, become largely irrelevant in terms of promoting behaviour change. We already know that sport and physical activity participation has many benefits, just as we know playing a musical instrument, cooking, painting, singing and having a pet have many health benefits, but the latter are not pushed on everyone and the former will never be taken up by everyone. Therefore, we must stop demonising sedentary behaviour in policy and the media, cease blaming inactivity for disease and increased health costs and begin by valuing and enabling all forms of leisure and lifestyle across the lifespan. Think about how *you* would like to age/are ageing. Reflect upon the varied lifestyles of all the people you know, whether they are artists, musicians, chefs, writers, etc. and consider the way diversity enriches their lives. Think about the words you use to give lifestyle and/or health advice. Are you showing an acceptance of difference and diversity in the way people of all ages live their lives?

To conclude, this collection is unique because most books on sport across the lifespan do not take a critical approach to health (or sport/physical activity) promotion, are limited in scope (with a focus on youth to adulthood only) and typically written from one theoretical or discipline-specific perspective (e.g., a developmental or medical or educational or sociological focus). By contrast, our book is an attempt to integrate perspectives from sociology, psychology, leisure studies and education within a critical framework. The questions raised and potential directions for

investigation summarised in our book would be of interest to policy makers, government bodies and organisations who promote sport and physical activity participation to others, any other stakeholders and deliverers of sporting goods and services, such as sporting clubs and businesses, as well as people of all ages who are interested in sport or not. We hope it makes you think differently about the promotion of Sport for All.

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Part I

Setting the Context: Sport Participation and Sport Policy

2

Sport Participation across the Lifespan: Australian Trends and Policy Implications

Rochelle M. Eime and Jack T. Harvey

Background

While sport participation has the potential to produce physical, social, and mental and health benefits at all stages of life (Eime et al. 2013a, b), rates and patterns of participation in sport change markedly across the lifespan (Eime et al. 2016a, f). There are many influences on participation in sport across the lifespan, including sport policy settings and the domains of the socio-ecological model—intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental and organisational factors (Eime et al. 2015e, 2016f). The importance of the various determinants of sport participation also differ across the lifespan (Eime et al. 2015e; Jenkin et al. 2016). This chapter explores the trends in sport participation across the lifespan with particular reference to results from a programme of research in the Australian

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state of Victoria—the *Sport and Recreation Spatial* programme. *Sport and Recreation Spatial* (www.sportandrecreationspatial.com.au) investigates sport and recreation participation, provision of facilities and associated indicators of health and wellbeing, to support evidence-based decision making in the Victorian sport and recreation sector.

Understanding sport participation trends and the influences on participation is important to inform sport policy and practice (Eime et al. 2015c; 2016f). Historically, the sports epidemiology and sports management domains have been hindered by the lack of systematic, coherent and robust data (Eime et al. 2015c). In terms of club-based sport participation, *Sport and Recreation Spatial* uniquely integrates data from a range of data custodians. It provides reliable geographically disaggregated measures of sport participation including trends over time, to inform decision making and investments by sporting organisations relating to participation initiatives and facility planning (Eime et al. 2016b, f). It also helps to inform future planning by state and local governments, and other funders and promoters of sport participation (Eime et al. 2016b). This chapter will explore Victorian and Australian patterns and trends in sport participation across the lifespan and discuss how policy affects participation. Notwithstanding the potential for social, mental and physical health benefits from sport participation throughout the population, the patterns of participation demonstrate that sport participants are not a broadly inclusive group. Particular strata such as children, adolescent males and those with higher socio-economic status (SES) tend to predominate, while groups such as older adults and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, particularly those in homogeneous metropolitan concentrations, are under-represented in the current sport participation landscape. If we are aiming for ‘Sport for all’ then systematic changes of policy and practice are required.

This chapter draws heavily on findings from a unique research programme established jointly by two universities in 2012 in the Australian state of Victoria, with support from the Sport and Recreation agency of the Victorian government, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). *Sport and Recreation Spatial* currently integrates sport participation data from 11 major Australian sports across the state of Victoria: Australian football, basketball, bowls, cricket, football (soccer), golf, gymnastics, hockey, net-

ball, sailing and tennis. In this chapter we will largely explore and discuss sport participation utilising 2015 club member sport participant data for ages 4–100, which included a total of 1,048,171 player registrations (Eime et al. 2016c). School-based sports participation is excluded.

Analyses have included investigation of age and gender profiles and inter-locational comparisons (79 local government areas, metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions) based on residential postcode. Participant records with missing age or postcode data were excluded, resulting in the analysis of 899,349 player records (Eime et al. 2016c).

In this chapter we examine participation rates according to four different life stages: children; adolescents; adults and older adults. Differences in participation trends between males and females, between resident geographical locations, metropolitan and regional areas, and relating to SES are also presented. For each of the life stages the participation trends are presented and discussed in the context of Australian sport policy. It will become evident that sport policy does influence sport participation; however, the feedback loop—the influence of current patterns of sport participation on sport policy—remains largely unexamined, and the latter is the ultimate goal of the *Sport and Recreation Spatial* enterprise.

Figure 2.1 summarises sport policy and practices across the four life stages. At the core is club-based sport. Also highlighted in the centre is ‘fun’ which is an integral component for participation at all ages. However, participation in sport is only fun if the programme and environment is conducive to fun, and if participants have an adequate level of skill to be competent and confident to play (Eime et al. 2010; Casey et al. 2009; Cohen et al. 2014). At each life stage the impacts of sport policies and practices on participation for these age cohorts are summarised. The blue ellipses represent levels of sport participation and illustrate that participation in sport is the highest amongst children and then declines throughout the lifespan. Other leisure-time physical activity preferences across the lifespan are represented by green ellipses. The orange ellipses represent elite competition and the purple ellipses indicate the supporting input of club volunteers, who may or may not also be participants (players). Also shown at each life stage are some key influences/determinants.

Key determinants across the lifespan include SES (Eime et al. 2017; Federico et al. 2012), cost of participation (Lim et al. 2011; Eime

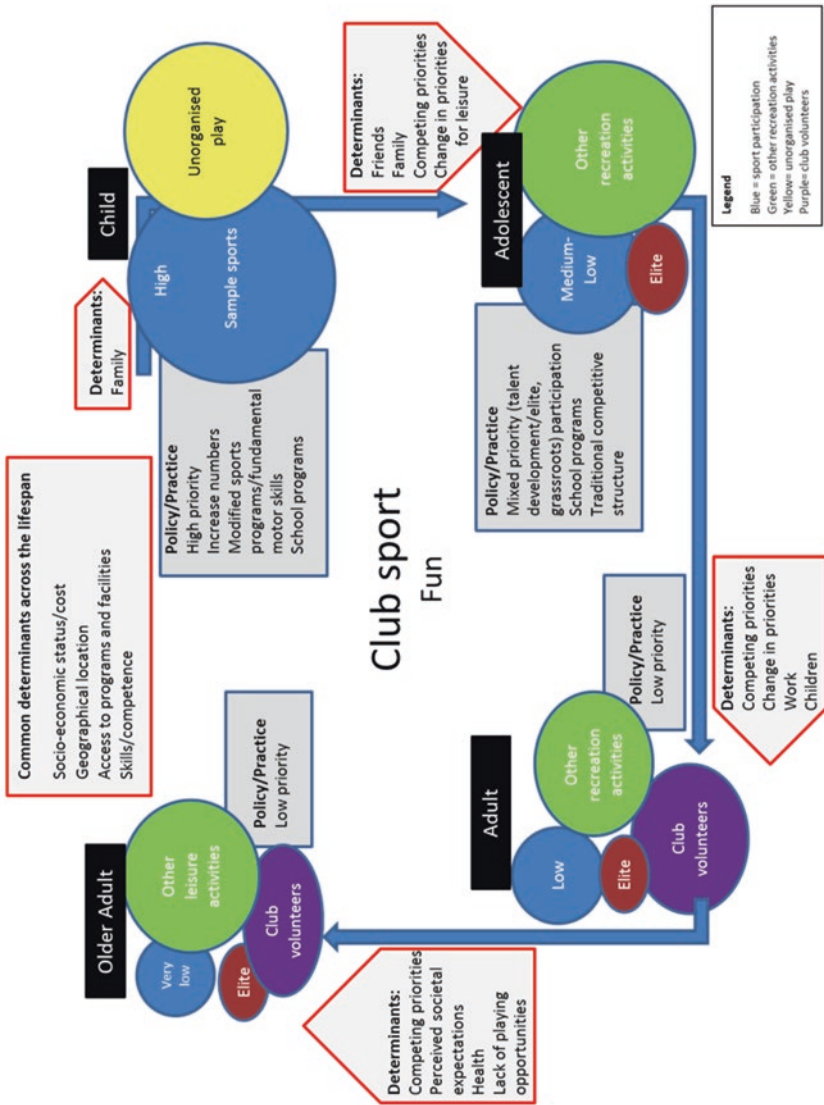


Fig. 2.1 Sport participation trends and determinants across the lifespan

et al. 2013c), geographic location (Eime et al. 2017, 2015f; Craike et al. 2011), access to sports programmes and facilities (Eime et al. 2013c; Limstrand 2008), and skill or competency (Casey et al. 2009; Eime et al. 2015d; Coté and Vierimaa 2014). One or more of these factors can be major barriers to participation. Furthermore, when people play a sport of their choice, it can be fun and enjoyable in a social context, and this contributes to people being intrinsically motivated to play (Eime et al. 2013a).

Children

Findings

Many children participate in sport. Participation in sport is dominated by children and young adolescents, with few adults playing sport (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013, 2015; Eime et al. 2009). Recent research in Victoria shows that the overall participation peaked for ages 5–14 years, representing a participation rate of 67% of the population in this age group (see Fig. 2.2) (Eime et al. 2016b) and 52% of all partici-

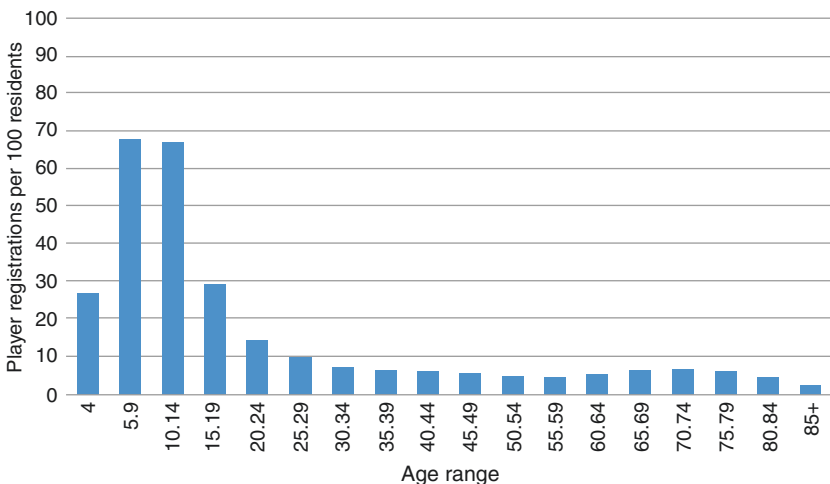


Fig. 2.2 Age-specific participation rates, 2015, Victoria

pants in these sports (Eime et al. 2016b). The introduction to sport for children is mainly through family influences, and children also tend to sample many sports throughout the early years (Eime et al. 2013c, 2015d; Coté and Vierimaa 2014). Club-based sport is a main source of organised physical activity for young children; however at these ages they also participate in unorganised or recreational play (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012).

Policy

Australian sport policy has a broad aim to get more people participating in sport; however there is also a particular emphasis on young people (Australian Sports Commission 2015b). Australian sport policy also recognises that to attract people into sport, the sport sector needs to develop or adapt its product offerings/programmes (Australian Sports Commission 2015b), which have traditionally focused on competitive structures. It is advised that sport should cater for the changing market, with former community club-based participants moving towards more socially oriented physical activity participation with a less exclusive focus on competition and more focus on playing for fun, in structures with more flexible timing, and with an emphasis on fitness and playing with friends (Australian Sports Commission 2015b). This policy regarding fun, friends and fitness in a social environment is backed by the recent literature (Eime et al. 2015e; Australian Sports Commission 2013a, b).

For young children participating in sport, much effort has been directed, in line with this policy, towards the development of new targeted products, generally termed 'modified sport products' or simply 'modified sport'. Modified sport is designed to provide an opportunity for young children, generally aged 4–12 years, to participate outside of school hours as a pathway to club sport competition (Eime et al. 2015d). Modified sports programmes engage children in play activities designed to develop fundamental motor skills and sport-specific skills to aid future participation in sport (Coté et al. 2009). However, there are more very young sport participants, including many four- and five-year-olds, compared to the past, because sports companies are marketing for younger

children in an attempt to increase their numbers (see Gard and Dionigi, this volume and Fraser-Thomas and Safai, this volume).

Whilst many young children are participating in sport and through modified sports programmes, the data shows that very few continue to play sport, with the majority dropping out within a four-year period of observation (Eime et al. 2015d). For children aged 4–12, fewer than 25% of females and fewer than 14% of males transitioned from a modified sports programme to club sport competition within the four-year period (Eime et al. 2015d). Furthermore, very few continued to play in the modified programme for the whole four-year period (females 3.9% and males 1.6%) (Eime et al. 2015d).

Adolescents

Findings

While high rates of participation in sport for children are evident, participation rates decline considerably during adolescence (Eime et al. 2016b, c; Olds et al. 2009). From a peak of participation at age 14, participation drops significantly. Participation amongst those aged 15–19 years was less than half of that among children aged 5–14 years (29% compared with 67%) (see Fig. 2.2) (Eime et al. 2016b).

There are many plausible reasons for this drop-off in sport participation during adolescence. Some of the drop-off may be due to a sampling, whereby younger children may participate in several sports and then when they get older, during adolescence, tend to ‘specialise’ in fewer sports or a single sport (Eime et al. 2015d; Coté and Vierimaa 2014).

When children transition into adolescence, there are often fewer sporting opportunities, as the structure becomes more formalised and competitive, and as the elite sporting pathway emerges for some (Eime et al. 2016e, f) (see also Chap. 6 in this volume by Wattie and Baker). In the context of these transitions there are fewer opportunities for those with lower levels of ability and/or confidence to play (Eime et al. 2016d). Furthermore, the decline in participation in sport during adolescence is also related to changing priorities for leisure time, where there is often a

shift from traditional (organised, competitive) sport to other non-competitive and non-organised recreation activities, such as more social unstructured play. Other competing life priorities such as study, work and relationships also increase in extent and priority during adolescence, which hinders continued participation in organised sport (Eime et al. 2016d, 2015e; Hajkowitz et al. 2013). Conversely, key positive influences during adolescence are the impact of family and friends (Eime et al. 2013c, 2015e, 2016d). Parents provide support via encouragement and praise and by watching their children participate (Eime et al. 2016d), and adolescent girls' enjoyment of sport is strongly linked to their friendship networks (Eime et al. 2013c).

Policy

From a sport policy perspective there are some driving forces likely to contribute to this trend of a decline in participation during adolescence. Firstly, notwithstanding a stated whole-of-population approach to sport policy, elite performance is a major sport policy priority (Australian Sports Commission 2015b), and much financial support is directed towards this facet of policy (Eime and Harvey 2015). Secondly, sport policy has a focus on year-to-year growth in participation (Australian Sports Commission 2015b). Therefore, not surprisingly, sports organisations focus first on elite pathway development for the talented few, and second on increasing overall participant numbers, as Wattie and Baker (Chap. 6 in this volume) have also found in Canada. With regard to increasing overall numbers, sports organisations are responding by targeting young, new participants, as this is seemingly easier than tackling the more difficult issues of retention of adolescents where we see significant numbers dropping out of sport, and other age cohorts such as older adults (Eime et al. 2016f).

National sport policy also specifically focuses on school-based programmes for both children and adolescents (Australian Sports Commission 2015b). However, to date there has been no evidence of any impact of these school programmes on the rates of transition from participation in

school to clubs, or that the school programmes are encouraging non-active people to become involved in sport. Furthermore, as Gard and Dionigi (2016) discuss, in terms of health promotion policy there is a shift in focus away from the promotion of 'sport' for young people and the increased advocacy for less-structured and more lifelong physical activities such as walking and jogging. Many sporting organisations have acknowledged that sports programmes delivered in school settings are not often efficient or effective ways to develop community-level sports participation through the transfer of school-based sport participants to club-based sports (Eime and Payne 2009). Without a policy and practical focus on retention, this trend of decline in adolescence, particularly among females, is not likely to dramatically change.

Adults

Findings

Few adults participate in sport (Eime et al. 2016c, e). From the age of 20 fewer than 15% of Victorians played sport, with a sharp decline through to less than 6% of those aged 40–44 years (see Fig. 2.2) (Eime et al. 2016c).

Policy

There is a void of specific sport policy for adults, with the focus clearly on children and youth, both for increasing participation and for elite pathways (Australian Sports Commission 2015b). This lack of focus is mirrored in the priorities and sport participation strategies of sports organisations. Furthermore, many adults prefer to be active in other recreational pursuits such as walking for recreation, going to the gym, cycling and swimming (Australian Sports Commission 2016). Like adolescents, adults also have competing priorities, albeit somewhat different to those of adolescents, with the necessity of work and, for many, chil-

dren and ageing parents, impacting their time and prioritisation for participation in sport. Adults with children involved in sport are also more likely to prioritise their children's participation over their own, and can often instead be non-participating club volunteers (Eime et al. 2009).

Older Adults

Findings

In terms of sport participation, older adults are often defined as those aged 50 years or over (Jenkin et al. 2016). Participation in sport for those aged 50+ is low, and has recently been reported to range from 6.8% for those aged 70–74 to less than 5% for ages 50–64, and 80+ (Eime et al. 2016c). From another perspective, less than 9% of all sports participants aged 4–100 were aged 50+ (Eime et al. 2016e). Clearly sport participation is not popular among older adults; they are more inclined to pursue less-competitive and less-organised types of leisure-time physical activity, such as walking (Eime et al. 2015c).

Policy

Whilst there is less research relating to determinants of participation in sport for older adults compared to other age groups, the available research indicates that barriers for older adults include: competing priorities, perceived societal expectations (e.g. many people do not perceive sport as an appropriate activity for older adults), lack of appropriate playing opportunities, lack of access to facility and lack of club capacity, sporting policy settings which prioritise children and elite sport, lack of interest in sport participation and risk management (e.g. additional first-aid resources may be required for older adults) (Jenkin et al. 2016). However, several recent studies of older adults' participation in sport have revealed that some are motivated to participate in sport in order to combat or mitigate the effects of the aging process (Jenkin et al. 2016; Dionigi 2016; Gayman et al. 2017).

As highlighted in a recent paper on sport for older adults, the focus areas of the Australian Sports Commission corporate plan is on: ‘win’ defined as international or elite success; ‘play’ through increasing participation in general; ‘thrive’ through sustainable sports governing bodies and ‘perform’ which relates to achieving organisational excellence (Australian Sports Commission 2015a; Jenkin et al. 2016). Thus, older adults are not a specific priority in terms of sport policy, and associated funding, and therefore not likely to be prioritised by sporting organisations (Jenkin et al. 2016). Whilst older adults may not be a specific priority within the current sport policy, ‘active ageing’ is prominent within the health and gerontological policy, where sport and physical activity are positioned to assist with delaying age-related health declines and keeping older adults healthy and productive, as problematised by Gard and Dionigi (2016).

Recent research suggests that while participation in sport by older adults is unlikely to significantly increase in the future, older adults play a vital role within club sport through volunteering (Jenkin et al. 2016), which is essential for many sport club systems across the globe to survive (Eime et al. 2008, 2009).

To this point we have examined the clear differences in sports participation trends across the lifespan. In the following sections we will examine other demographic and regional differences in sports participation.

Males and Females

Findings

There are consistent differences in sport participation between males and females. The overall sport participation rate is twice as high for males (20%) as for females (11%) (Eime et al. 2016c). Within some age groups the difference is even larger. The largest difference in participation rates is among children aged 5–14 years. Participation rates are around 80% for boys compared to around 50% for girls of the same age (Eime et al. 2016c).

Policy

The lower rates of participation among females can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, whilst there is recent growth in sports participation opportunities for females, there are more sports that are traditionally 'male-dominated' (e.g. Australian football, soccer and cricket) than 'female-dominated' (Eime et al. 2016b). Furthermore, females are less likely to participate in organised sport, and are more likely to pursue non-competitive and unorganised recreational pursuits than males (Eime et al. 2015c).

Other likely factors include the visibility of females in sport, including in positions of leadership, in the media and as role models in general. Females are not traditionally associated with sport leadership positions as these are dominated by males (Litchfield 2015). Secondly, sports media coverage is heavily skewed towards male sport with limited coverage of female sports (Eime and Harvey 2015). This difference has been quantified as females are represented in less than 10% of all sports coverage in Australian television news media (Australian Sports Commission 2014). These outcomes contribute to a lack of visible female role models, which impacts on female participation in sport (Young et al. 2015).

Metropolitan and Regional Areas

Findings

For most age groups across the lifespan, participation rates are higher in regional and rural areas (40% overall) than in metropolitan areas (27%) (Eime et al. 2016c). Furthermore, there is evidence that participation is lower in metropolitan growth areas than in more established metropolitan areas, especially for children aged 14 years and under (Eime et al. 2016c). Recent research suggests that across Australia, whilst there are indications that as remoteness increases participation in physical activity in general decreases, for club-based team sports, as remoteness increases participation also increases (Eime et al. 2015f). Some key reasons for this difference are outlined below.

Policy

Sport policy, at least in Australia, does not explicitly differentiate between regions such as metropolitan areas and regional and rural areas. However, there are distinctions between the characteristics of different regions which affect participation.

The higher rates of sport participation in regional areas than in metropolitan areas is likely to reflect the types of leisure-time physical activity available in different regions (Eime et al. 2015f). There are often more leisure-time physical activity options available for people within metropolitan regions compared to smaller rural towns and communities (Eime et al. 2015f). Furthermore, club-based sport plays a central social role within regional communities, where it is considered a major contributor to social connectedness and a source of community pride (Eime et al. 2015a). Another likely contributing factor to higher participation in regional areas is likely to be access to facilities. Greater access to facilities supports increased participation in sport (Eime et al. 2015e). Regional and rural areas have low population density, more clustered population and more space for the provision of sports facilities, whereas metropolitan cities have higher and more homogeneous residential density with limited open space for new sports facility provision (Eime et al. 2017).

Socio-economic Status

Socio-economic status (SES) is not a specific focus of national sport policy. We know that participation in physical activity can be costly, and there is much research suggesting that participation in sport is higher in more affluent areas than in lower SES areas (Eime et al. 2013c; Federico et al. 2012); (Eime et al. 2015f), and that participants in low SES areas are more likely to drop out (Manz et al. 2016). These are similar to recent European findings (see Chap. 3 by Scheerder, Vandermeerschen and Breedveld in this volume) and North American findings (see Chap. 6 in this volume). However, the relationship is complex when regional differences in patterns of SES and types of sport participation are taken into account. For instance, one study showed that as SES decreased, participa-

tion in many team sports actually increased (Eime et al. 2015f). Any future policy that is aimed at increasing population levels of sport participation will need to include strategies to address this complex issue.

International Comparisons

In spite of the above findings, international study comparisons should be interpreted with caution because of differences between countries in the definitions of sport, and differences in study designs (Nicholson et al. 2010). Furthermore, this Victorian research is unique in that it is based on the whole-population participation data across the whole lifespan, rather than being based on a sample survey, or a specific limited age range. However, broadly speaking, there is some evidence that the Australian trend of a peak in participation in sport during adolescence followed by a steady decline is consistent with other studies in Belgium and Germany (Maia et al. 2010; Manz et al. 2016).

A recent systematic review of sport and leisure-time physical activities across the different regions of Africa, Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and Western Pacific reported that recreational pursuits such as walking and running were common across all these regions (Hulteen et al. 2017). However, sports (as per the Australian definition, which limits sports participation to that which is organised and competitive, and therefore does not include other leisure activities such as walking) (Australian Sports Commission n.d.) were more region specific except for soccer, which was quite popular across all regions (Hulteen et al. 2017).

For adults, the Australian pattern of higher participation for males than females also occurs in many European countries including France, Latvia, Slovakia, Greece, Belgium and the UK (Van Tuyckom et al. 2010). However, in Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) in some age groups women had higher participation rates than men (Van Tuyckom et al. 2010). The Australian trend of sport participation amongst adults decreasing with age is consistent with other international studies, including in Spain and the Netherlands (Palacios-Ceña et al. 2012; Cozijnsen et al. 2013).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Participation in sport varies considerably across the lifespan. In addition to persistent demographic characteristics such as gender, location and SES, there are many age-specific determinants across different life stages. This chapter illustrates how sport policy can and does influence some of the trends we see in participation across the lifespan. However, how the present state of sport participation across the lifespan can affect sport policy remains to be seen. Based on the research findings presented in this chapter, we can draw some general conclusions about the current participation trends. Therefore, finally, we make recommendations for policy development.

Whilst sport is not the most popular leisure-time physical activity across the lifespan for most people, it is popular, especially amongst children. Furthermore, there is some evidence that participation in club-based sport has recently increased. These increases are likely in part to be due to both sport policy and other strategic investments from sports organisations, as well as from all levels of governments.

Key determinants that are consistent across the lifespan include effects of SES, for example the direct effect of the capacity to meet the cost of participation in sport, but also potentially other SES-related indirect effects such as access to programmes and facilities and cultural, ageing and gender norms. Geographic location is also included in this mix. Before we see any substantive, broad public increase in sport participation, sport policy and strategic practices are going to need to address, where possible, these key social determinants of health and lifestyle.

Age-specific determinants include the development of sport-specific skills and competency among children, the opportunity to turn towards other forms of physical activity during adolescence and the consequent need from the sport perspective to provide more accessible and less competitive programmes tailored to the needs of older adolescents and adults, particularly women, as they transition through various life stages pertaining to education, work and family.

In light of these conclusions, our first recommendation is to develop sport products/programmes and opportunities directed at various

stages across the lifespan, but particularly focusing on adolescence, when the greatest drop-off in participation occurs. In addition to the traditional club-competitive structure, sports organisations must cater to people's changing priorities for more recreation, social-based play, together with people of similar level of competency and similar age levels. If people have not acquired the fundamental motor skills when they are young, any strategic focus on entry into sport for adolescents and adults is going to have to pay particular attention to skill development, so that people are competent and therefore confident to play sport and enjoy it, remembering that fun is central to continued participation in sport.

Secondly, if we can retain players in sport and attract new participants as well, through the provision of more social and recreational sport products, then we need to ensure that the sport system has the capacity to deliver. Is the Australian sport system, which is heavily dependent on volunteers at the community club level, going to be able to cater for an influx in participants?

Thirdly, infrastructure is integral to any growth in sport participation, and we see that residents in growth areas are often hindered by the lack of opportunities to play, which in turn impacts on participation rates. There is a need for planning and provision of infrastructure, including novel solutions for higher intensity of use where land is scarce.

Adopting these recommendations will take time and resources and willingness of the sport sector to adapt and support changes to established ways of thinking and operating. Given the range of physical, social and mental health benefits to which participation in sport can contribute, 'sport for all' is a worthy goal. However, systematic changes to sport and health policy and practice will be required for sport to be more inclusive, because as it stands, sport participation is dominated by young middle-class males. At the state and national levels, getting more people active through sport and making opportunities for sport sustainability may require a major redirection of sport policy, including a redirection of some funding away from the elite level and towards population-level participation.

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3

Diversity in Participation Reigns, Policy Challenges Ahead: Sport for All (Ages) from a European Perspective

Jeroen Scheerder, Hanne Vandermeersch,
and Koen Breedveld

Introduction

Participating in sport is a necessary condition for taking advantage of the benefits that sport has to offer. One can enjoy sport as a spectator, and as such experience the joy of winning or the frustration of losing. Still, in order to reap the gains from sport in terms of, for example, health or social capital, one needs to be actively engaged in sport participation itself. Therefore, as statistics show that it is not self-evident that everyone takes up sport and that large social groups refrain from sport, governmental sport policies have been noticeably concerned over the last few decades with stimulating participation in sport. This was as much true for the Sport for All policies that dominated the 1960s and 1970s, as it is for the health-enhancing physical activity policies of today. Though wordings and foci differ from policy to policy, stimulating that as many people

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as possible are physically active in sport and that no one feels socially excluded, was and is an important goal of any sound sport policy.

In this contribution we will depict the current state of affairs regarding Sport for All in Europe, in terms of active sport participation. What has been won or lost in half a decade of stimulating sport participation? What differences occur in the degree of sport participation across social groups and across countries? What factors can help us understand the differences and similarities? The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, we will elaborate on the European model of sport. This model will be discussed from a critical stance by introducing an alternative approach. Second, we will shortly go into the existing research on sport participation, both in terms of methods and outcomes. Next, by making use of empirical participation data, attention will be paid to geographical differences and to differences between social groups. In addition, we will offer two main explanations for these differences. Keeping in mind that sport participation is primarily the responsibility of the member states and less of the European Union itself, we will focus to a large degree on figures on sport participation at the country level. We will conclude this chapter with some recommendations for research as well as policy making.

The European Model of Sport

In his three-volume companion on sport governance in the world, Sobry (2011: 14) stresses that the organisation of sport is strongly determined by the history of countries and their social and political structures. This seems especially the case in Europe where a multifaceted patchwork of sport organisations and sport policies prevails (see Hallmann and Petry 2013; Miede 2011). However, regardless of the substantial diversity in sport governance and sport organisations within Europe, the following distinct features generally characterise European sport systems: to a relatively large extent they are (i) based on voluntarily run sport clubs, (ii) they are facilitated by (in)direct public support and public funding, and (iii) they focus on Sport for All, by taking into account the principle of subsidiarity¹ (cf. European Commission 1999; Henry 2003; Miede 2011). Across Europe, grass-roots sport

clubs are assembled in national and sometimes also regional federations. From their part, national sport federations are members of a sport federation at the European level, under the supervision of an international federation (EC/DGICCAM 1999). This structure is referred to as the *European Sport Model* (Arnaut 2006; EC/DGICCAM 1999; UEFA 2005),² and is represented in the form of a pyramid. The pyramid metaphor is used to refer to the relationship between local/mass sport at the one hand, and international/elite sport on the other. More precisely, the pyramid model describes the sport system according to its institutional organisation (from local sport clubs to international sport federations, and vice versa), as well as to its levels of competition (from grassroots to elite sport, and vice versa).

This rather conservative way of representing the world of sport by means of the pyramid model has been criticised by, among others, Eichberg (2008), Heinilä (1971) and Renson (1983, 2002). These scholars state that the description of sport as a pyramid puts a large, if not too much, emphasis on competition and hierarchy, implying a claim of bureaucratic power and political control. The pyramid model can neither be seen as a mere model of organisation and structuring, nor as a democratic and inclusive system. Like other pyramids in history, the pyramid model of sport represents a normative, one-dimensional, centralistic and monopolistic order (Eichberg 2008). Although elite sport is undeniably based on mass sport, mass sport is not necessarily dependent on elite sport (Scheerder et al. 2011b). Moreover, the pyramid model of sport seems to downsize sport practices to club-organised sport only. Though sport participation in a club occurs in all European countries, its relative importance—as compared to the overall sport participation—shows great variation, and it is no longer the sole basis for grass-roots sport. Thus, though highly important and relevant, competitive sport and club-organised sport are only a part of the sport picture nowadays. Other forms of sport participation should also be taken into account. Non-competitive and often non-organised sport activities, such as mass running, recreational cycling, countryside hiking, urban dance, gym spinning, street soccer, playground basketball, and so on, follow organisational and participatory patterns that are significantly different from the one-dimensional, hierarchical and exclusive system represented by the pyramid

model. In particular, the so-called *light sport communities*, consisting of informal and rather small groups of sport participants, do not fit into the logic of the pyramid model of sport (Borgers et al. 2015; Scheerder et al. 2015b; Scheerder and Vos 2011; Van Bottenburg et al. 2010). Thus, the representation of sport by applying the pyramid model neglects the existence of a wide spectrum of sport organisations and sport activities.

Plurality in terms of how sport is organised as well as who participates in sport has contested the idea of a unified representation of sport. New stakeholders, such as commercial providers and individual participants, have entered the sport scene. The so-called ‘church model of sport’, developed by Scheerder et al. (2011b), attempts to provide a more adequate representation of sport (see Fig. 3.1). Although the proportions of the modes of sport can differ to some extent, this representation is likely to be applicable in most of the European countries. The church model indicates that performance sport and participation sport coexist, without a hierarchical order between them. Together, they form the nave of the

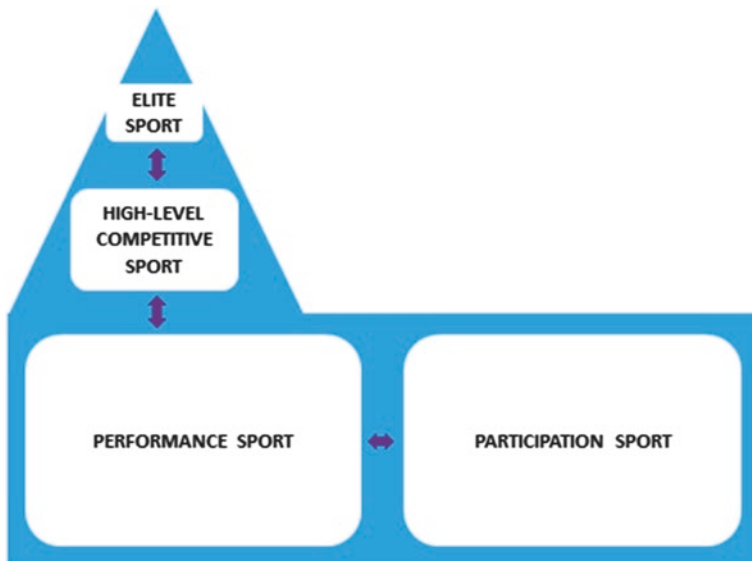


Fig. 3.1 The church model of sport. Source: Own adaptation based on Scheerder et al. (2011b: 8)

church, or in other words, they are responsible for the lion's share of sport participation and sport provisions. Only a part of the performance sport can be considered as forming the basis of high-level competitive sport, which then in its turn might lead to elite sport, represented by the tower of the church. Moreover, the competitive logic is not the only possible logic, as many people nowadays participate in sport for health and/or social reasons and do not care so much about winning, records or athletic performances. All throughout Europe, the non-competitive and/or non-organised types of sport coexist along with competitive sport. These relatively new forms of sport receive more and more attention from both participants and providers, and therefore require a considerable amount of space and facilities.

Sport for All in the EU28

In this section, we discuss the current situation in terms of Sport for All in Europe. It should be noted that although the European dimension of sport has grown—as can be witnessed, for example, by recent policy developments at the European level, as explained above—sport remains mainly a national or subnational matter. By consequence, most empirical research on sport participation also takes place at the (sub)national level. This makes it harder to capture Sport for All in Europe in figures. Clearly, some comparative studies have been undertaken within Europe (see f.i. Hartmann-Tews 2006; Scheerder et al. 2011b; UK Sport 1999; Van Bottenburg et al. 2005; Van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010), but single country studies are far more common. This is somewhat striking, as comparative studies can be highly valuable as an instrument to understand a given situation and to identify good and bad policy practices. A main difficulty in making cross-national comparisons in Europe, however, is a shortage of comparable data. Most countries do have good quality data at the national level, but due to differences in population, methodology or operationalisation, they cannot easily be compared cross-nationally (Breedveld et al. 2013). A major problem, amongst others, is the operationalisation of sport and physical activity, which differs substantially among countries (Scheerder et al. 2011b).³

Still, there are some international surveys, which do not exclusively focus on sport, but do include some sport-related questions, such as the *International Social Survey Programme* (ISSP), the *Harmonised European Time Use Survey* (HETUS), the *European Values Study* (EVS) and the *European Social Survey* (ESS). Though these surveys often offer less detailed information as compared to sport-related national surveys, they do allow us to at least make cross-national comparisons. Highly informative with regard to sport is also the *Eurobarometer*, which is issued by the European Commission to inform policies. The Eurobarometer is a survey in all 28 European member states and focuses mainly on the public opinion in the member states. In addition to the 'standard' Eurobarometer, *Special Eurobarometer* reports are also issued, covering a variety of themes. In 2004, 2010 (data collection 2009) and 2014 (data collection 2013), a Special Eurobarometer report on sport and physical activity was published. The data collection of the *Special Eurobarometer 412 on Sport and Physical Activity* of 2013 involved 27,919 face-to-face interviews among citizens 15 years and older in the 28 member states of the European Union, on behalf of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (European Commission 2014). Results from this 2013 survey can be compared to the results of the 2009 survey, in order to picture the evolution of sport participation. The questionnaire was changed between 2004 and 2009, which hampers comparison with the earliest measurement. In the present chapter we will mainly rely on the Eurobarometer data to discuss Sport for All in the European Union, and more particularly participation figures. Caution remains necessary though, when comparing between countries, as interpretations of the concepts of sport and physical activity, may differ cross-nationally (Breedveld et al. 2013; Hoekman et al. 2011; Scheerder et al. 2011b).

The results of the Special Eurobarometer of 2013 indicate that a majority of the European citizens still seldom or never exercises or plays sport (59%). Exercise is defined here as 'any form of physical activity which you do in a sport context or sport-related setting, such as swimming, training in a fitness centre or sport club, running in the park, etc.' The remaining 41% exercises or participates in sport with at least some regularity. One third of the EU citizens (33%) declares to exercise or to play sport one to four times a week, whereas a smaller group of less than one

in ten EU citizens (8%) exercises or plays sport at least five times a week (European Commission 2014).

In the Eurobarometer, respondents were also asked whether they are a member of a club in which they participate in sport or recreational physical activity. In the questionnaire, a distinction is made between (i) sport clubs, (ii) health or fitness centres and (iii) socio-cultural associations that include sport in their activities (e.g. employees' clubs, youth clubs, school and university-related clubs). Almost three-quarters of EU-citizens (74%) are not a member of any club. Conversely, approximately one in four citizens stated to be a club member. Twelve per cent of the respondents is a member of a sport club. Health and fitness centres represent a comparable share of 11%. Only a small minority (3%) of the EU citizens stated to be member of a socio-cultural association that includes sport in its activity (European Commission 2014).

The results of the 2013 Special Eurobarometer on Sport and Physical Activity indicate that most of the activity of the respondents who exercise or play sport, or engage in another kind of physical activity, takes place in informal settings, such as parks and outdoors, and at home (European Commission 2014). This fits with research findings with regard to the popularity of sports published by Scheerder et al. (2011b), who indicated that many European citizens have a preference for individual sports. In this study, scholars from different European countries were asked to complete a fact sheet on sport participation in their country, based on available national or regional data. In total, 22 European countries/regions took part in the study (totally or partially). The specific 'top five' of most popular sports varies between countries, but overall, a preference for individual sports such as running, fitness/gym, swimming, cycling or walking could be observed (see also Scheerder et al. 2015a).

Geographical Divide in Sport Participation

Across the European Union, citizens are not equally likely to participate in sport. As Van Bottenburg and colleagues (2005: 201) stated, it is 'almost pointless to speak of average sport participation in the European Union'. Levels of sport participation show a large geographical variation.

The Nordic countries demonstrate the highest level of regular sport participation. In Sweden, Denmark and Finland, weekly sport participation amounts to 70%, 68% and 66%, respectively (European Commission 2014). Also in the Netherlands, many people participate in sport at least on a weekly basis (58%). Countries with high shares of the population never participating in sport, on the other hand, are Bulgaria (78%), Malta (75%), Portugal (64%), Italy (60%) and Romania (60%). In Sweden, Denmark and Finland, this is only 9%, 14% and 15%, respectively. Similar results were found in the research of Scheerder et al. (2011b), comparing data between different European countries based on available national sport participation surveys. Here too, Denmark and Finland, but also Germany and Switzerland, were found to have the highest weekly sport participation.⁴ Countries and regions such as England, Flanders (Belgium) and France hold an intermediate position. Summarising the findings, we observe a geographical participation gap. Generally speaking, there is a North–South and a West–East divide, with countries to the North and to the West presenting higher levels of sport participation as compared to their southern and eastern counterparts (Scheerder et al. 2011b; Van Bottenburg et al. 2005; Van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010).

With regard to club membership, there are substantial geographical differences as well. Countries with the highest percentage of membership in sport clubs are the Netherlands (27%), Denmark (25%), Germany (24%), Sweden (22%) and Luxembourg (21%). At the other end of the continuum, we find Romania (1%), Bulgaria (2%), Poland (3%) and Portugal (4%), being countries with a low percentage of club-organised sport participants. Health or fitness centres are most popular in Sweden (33%), Denmark (25%), the Netherlands (19%) and the UK (18%). Remarkably, though Finland has a very high share of sport participation, still 70 per cent of the citizens state that they are not a member of any club. A similar conclusion was reached in the study of Scheerder et al. (2011b). In other words, a high rate of sport participation is not necessarily followed by a high rate of club participation. Cultural habits and preferences regarding sport play a defining role as well. Finland also shows a low rate of competitive sport participation (Scheerder et al. 2011b).

Social Stratification of Sport Participation

Not only with regard to geography but also regarding socio-economic background, there are considerable differences in terms of sport participation across Europe. Research has indicated that, notwithstanding the fact that Sport for All policies have been installed since several decades in many European countries, sport participation is still not fully democratised. First, as can be observed in Table 3.1, the likelihood of weekly exercise or sport decreases with age. The differences are rather large: whereas 65 per cent of the citizens aged 15 to 24 participate in sport at least weekly, this is only 28 per cent among people aged 65 and older. Conversely, whereas over six out of ten adults of 65 or older (63%) state never to have participated in any sport activity, this holds for less than four out of ten adults between 35 and 44 (37%), and among people younger than 25, less than one in five never participates in sport. With regard to sport participation in the context of a sports club, there is a clear drop out after the age of 24. In other words, in the EU28, sports clubs remain mainly a setting for the European youth.

Figure 3.2 gives the share of weekly sport participation and club participation by age, for 2009 and 2013. From this graph, it can be observed that the differences in participation by age are rather stable over time. The decline in participation rates by increasing age is highly similar in 2013 as compared to 2009, at least at European level. So far, there has been no levelling of age differences in sport participation in the European Union as a whole. Also for club participation, results are rather similar between 2009 and 2013, with a main drop out after the youth phase.

Table 3.1 Sport participation by age group in EU28, in percentages

Age	Never (%)	Sometimes, but less than once per week (%)	At least weekly (%)	At a sports club (%)
15–24	18.8	16.6	64.7	21.1
25–34	30.0	20.4	49.7	12.4
35–44	37.2	21.7	41.1	13.1
45–54	43.4	19.7	36.9	11.4
55–64	52.5	15.2	32.4	9.3
65 +	63.0	9.5	27.6	7.7

Source: Own calculations based on Eurobarometer 2013

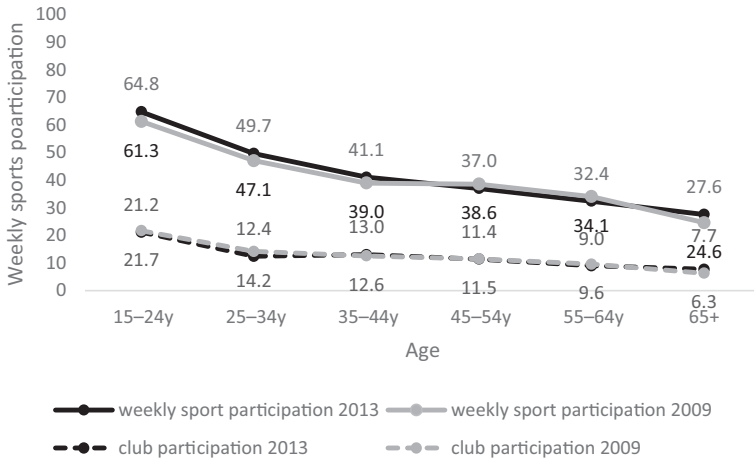


Fig. 3.2 Weekly sport participation by age in the EU27⁵ for 2009 and 2013, in percentages. Source: Own calculations based on Eurobarometer 2009 and Eurobarometer 2013

Second, within Europe, in addition to the age-related differences, differences between men and women can also be seen, with men being more likely (45%) to practise sport on a weekly basis, as compared to women (37%). Third, the study of Van Tuyckom and Scheerder (2010) shows that individuals with a lower educational level are less likely to participate in sport. The results from the Special Eurobarometer 2013 corroborate this finding. Whereas 52 per cent of the European citizens who continued studying until the age of 20 or above practise sport at least once a week, this is only 23% among Europeans who finished their education at the age of 15 or earlier. In the intermediate group of European citizens who quit studying between the ages of 16 and 19, 45% practises sport on a weekly basis (European Commission 2014). Sport behaviour is also related to one’s financial situation. Findings from the Special Eurobarometer 2013 indicate that people who declare to have difficulties paying bills are less likely to practise sport as compared to their counterparts in a financially comfortable situation. In particular, whereas 45% of Europeans who ‘(almost) never’ have difficulties paying bills practise sport weekly, this is 36% among citizens who have difficulties ‘from time to time’. Among people experiencing difficulties ‘most of the time’, the share of sport participants is still lower, that is, 28%.

The social stratification of sport participation is, however, tied to the geographical divide within Europe. In some countries social differences play a larger role than in others. For instance, Hartmann-Tews (2006) shows that educational differences are much larger in countries such as Poland and Slovenia for example, whereas in Denmark and Sweden, sport participation is less linked to educational background. Also with regard to age and gender, differences vary by country. Overall, social stratification plays a larger role in countries that joined the European Union in 2004⁶ as compared to earlier EU member states. Also the study of Scheerder et al. (2011b) indicates that the gender gap varies greatly per country. The lowest gender difference in weekly participation is observed in Finland, Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland (difference of less than 3%). Remarkably, in Denmark, women were found to be more likely to participate in sport than men. Among the countries included in this study, Spain and Northern Ireland, on the other hand, showed the largest differences, with a gender gap of more than 10%. Differences by age or education were not included in this study.

In order to get a closer grip on the geographical divide in Europe with regard to age-related differences in sport participation, we plotted weekly sport participation by age in Fig. 3.3, by means of country clusters. The country clusters used here take both the geographical position as well as the entry in the European Union into account, as earlier research findings show that both these elements are linked to sport participation. The cluster of Scandinavian countries contains Denmark, Finland and Sweden. The Anglo-Saxon cluster comprises the UK and Ireland. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg and the Netherlands are clustered together as continental European countries. Southern European countries are Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Countries that entered the European Union in 2004 are Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. Also Croatia, which entered in 2013, is added to this group since this country has a more similar profile to this cluster of countries than to Bulgaria and Romania, which both entered in 2007. The latter form the last cluster.

Figure 3.3 shows that there are huge geographical differences in the relation between age and weekly sport participation. In all clusters of countries, we observe a decline in sport participation for the higher age

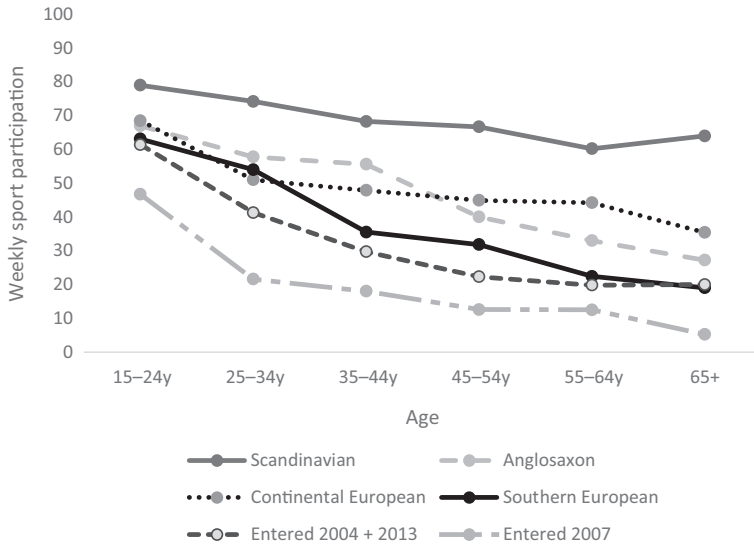


Fig. 3.3 Weekly sport participation by age and country cluster in the EU28 for 2013, in percentages. Source: Own calculations based on Eurobarometer 2013

groups, but this decline starts at varying ages for the different clusters. In the cluster of countries entering in 2007, participation drops heavily after the age of 24. In these countries, sport participation is still mainly a ‘youth activity’. Also for countries entering in 2004 or 2013, there is a big fall in sport participation after the age of 24, and participation levels even continue to decline sharply with increased age. In Southern Europe, the decline comes later, at the age of 35. From then onwards, participation weakens drastically. The Scandinavian countries present a very different picture. In this cluster of countries, we can almost speak of a life-time sport participation pattern. Even if lower participation figures for older age groups can still be observed as compared to the youngest citizens, the decline is milder, and at the age of 65 or higher, still a very large share of the population (65%) practices sports. In Scandinavian countries, there is even a small rise after the age of 64, with people aged 65 or higher being slightly more likely to practise sports as compared to people aged 55–64. Continental European countries can be situated in between. Though there is also a large decline in sport participation with older age

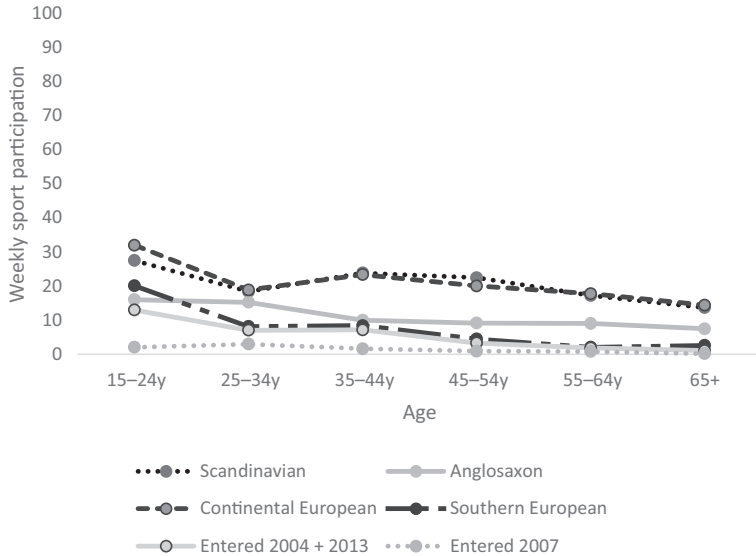


Fig. 3.4 Club sport participation by age and country cluster in the EU28 for 2013, in percentages. Source: Own calculations based on Eurobarometer 2013

groups, here too we see that even in the group of people of 65 years and older, there is still over one third of the population (35%) taking part in sports. Figure 3.3 also indicates that there are geographical differences in sport participation at all ages, but these differences are larger for older age groups than for younger people. Countries with higher levels of overall sport participation (cf. supra) generally present a milder age stratification.

Finally, plotting participation in a club context by age in Fig. 3.4, we observe that the drop in club participation after youth, as described earlier, occurs in most clusters. There are two exceptions, namely the Anglo-Saxon cluster, where the fall occurs later, and the cluster formed by Romania and Bulgaria. In the latter, club participation is already very low during youth (2%). We can also conclude that, with regard to club participation, the Scandinavian countries are joined in their position of 'frontrunners' by continental European countries. Both clusters show higher club participation rates for all age groups compared to the other clusters (Fig. 3.4).

Explaining the Geographical and Social Divide

A question that arises when observing the large differences in sport participation rates is: what brings about these differences? We will try to point out some of the contributing factors. However, we can by no means be exhaustive here, as sport participation is determined by a complex interplay of many factors at the micro, meso and macro level. In short, we want to draw the attention to two main factors, i.e. (i) the large variety of sport policies, organisation and provision *within* Europe, and (ii) the influence of societal values and cultural preferences outside the realm of sport.

Within Europe, there are important dissimilarities with regard to sport policy and the organisation of sport (see f.i. Hallman and Petry 2013; Miege 2011; Scheerder et al. 2011b). These differences might affect sport participation behaviour. The first element is the relative importance of Sport for All. The balance between investments in elite sport and Sport for All, and the stability of Sport for All policies in recent decades varies largely among European countries (Bergsgard et al. 2007). These differences can partially be traced back to dissimilarities in cultural values underpinning the political system and society as a whole (Bergsgard et al. 2007). For example, in Scandinavian countries, equality and solidarity are considered highly important and inform many policy decisions. It is therefore hardly surprising to observe that in countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, Sport for All policies are consistently prioritised, and social inequality in terms of sport participation is smaller as compared to other countries (see also Van Bottenburg et al. 2005). In addition, countries also differ in terms of the role the public sector takes with regard to sport, the institutional organisations involved, and the interplay and relative role distribution between different actors, that is, public sector, civil society and market (cf. Bergsgard et al. 2007; Camy et al. 2004; Hallmann and Petry 2013; Henry 2009; Houlihan 1997; Petry et al. 2004).

At a more concrete level, differences in sport provision, and more generally, the availability of sport opportunities, are likely to have an impact. For example, a German study by Wicker et al. (2009) provides evidence

that the availability of sport infrastructure has a clear influence on patterns of sport activity, regardless of individual socio-economic conditions. The findings from the Eurobarometer show that there are indeed large differences in the availability of sport across Europe. In particular, the results indicate that in many southern, central or eastern European countries, with rather low percentages of sport participants, a large share of the respondents state that the area where they live does not offer many opportunities to be physically active. This is the case for Bulgaria (53%), Romania (47%), Slovakia (39%), Greece (37%), Hungary (34%), Malta (33%) and Portugal (30%). In Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, on the other hand, over 90 per cent of the citizens do believe that the area they live in offers many opportunities to be physically active. When asked about the local sport clubs and other local providers, in Bulgaria and Romania, half of the respondents (50%) totally disagreed with the statement that these providers offer many opportunities to be physically active. However, here we can also partly question the direction of the effect, as a higher sport participation rate, and hence a higher demand, may also encourage investments in sport infrastructure.

Yet, as Coalter (2013) rightly points out, sport participation rates can be influenced by sport policy only to a limited extent. To understand sport participation, it is necessary to put it in a broader societal framework, and to take the values of a particular society into account. Moreover, social stratification in sport participation is above all a reflection of social dividing lines in the society at large (see Coalter 2013). In other words, the large differences in terms of sport participation—or the presence of different ‘sporting worlds’ in Europe, as Van Tuyckom (2013; see also Mieke 2011 and Petry et al. 2004) has phrased it—reflect the presence of very distinct social and cultural realities in the 28 member states of the European Union.

Conclusion

All in all, it seems that the idea(l)s behind the Sport for All ideology can still be considered an inspiring point on the horizon, but that in practice sport remains the outcome of processes of social differentiation and

inequality. Although the field of sport is no longer the exclusive territory of young, well-off males, even today differences in socio-economic status (as represented by differences in levels of education and income) continue to structure levels of sport participation. In addition, it becomes clear that levels of sport participation differ to a great deal between countries, with the highest levels of participation being reported in the more affluent northern and western parts of Europe, and the lowest in the less-affluent eastern and southern parts.

Policy-wise it appears that we need to accept that the influence of sport policies is rather limited. Levels of sport participation appear primarily to be the result of cultural changes, commercial and private initiatives and economic conditions. Political structures may influence levels of investments in grassroots sport and the direction of those investments (in physical education, support for sport clubs and/or sport facilities). There is sufficient evidence that sport participation flourishes in systems that actively allow room for grassroots sport to develop, in whatever kind of way. However, given the current state of affairs of sport participation, further raising the levels of sport participation—especially among groups that lag behind—will demand a great deal from sport policies and may well prove to go beyond the prevailing budgets of most governments.

Needless to say that it would help policy makers if research outcomes could steer key policy decisions. It should be said, however, that research on sport participation limits itself to describing patterns and developments in sport participation, and is ill-equipped in relating those patterns to differences in sport policies. Generally, researchers lack available data and financial resources to adequately analyse the influence of policy interventions on sport participation. It would take a team of dedicated sport researchers of different theoretical backgrounds, teaming up with policy makers and statisticians, to develop such a sport participation and sport policy model (Breedveld et al. 2013; Scheerder et al. 2011b). As this is beyond the reach of most parties involved, perhaps there is a task for the EU in stimulating such a breakthrough, and in so doing seriously raising the odds of developing a real instead of an ideal Sport for All policy.

Notes

1. The subsidiarity principle lays down that matters ought to be handled by the lowest possible political and/or administrative level and as close to the citizens as possible. Consequently, sport used to be dominated by voluntary sport associations.
2. At the end of the 1990s, the European Commission (1999) introduced the so-called European sport model, suggesting that common characteristics could be discerned regarding the structuration of sport in Europe, regardless of the cross-national diversity of sport practices and systems. It is remarkable, however, that only a couple of years later, the European Commission (CEC 2007: 12) in its *White Paper on Sport* no longer referred to the concept of the European sport model, as a single model of sport seemed to be 'unrealistic'.
3. In order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information about sport participation and sport governance cross-nationally, a research network called 'MEASURE' was initiated in 2010 by researchers from the University of Leuven and the Mulier Institute (Breedveld and Scheerder 2011; Scheerder et al. 2011a, b). MEASURE stands for *Meeting for European Sport Participation and Sport Culture Research* (see www.measuresport.eu/news).
4. There were no data for Sweden in this study.
5. Croatia entered the European Union in 2013. To ensure comparability, Croatia is excluded from our calculations for 2013 here as well.
6. Bulgaria and Romania entered the European Union in 2007. Croatia did so in 2013. Consequently, these three countries were not included in the study of Hartmann-Tews (2006), as data from the Eurobarometer survey of 2004 have been used in that analysis.

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4

From a Lucky Few to the Reluctant Many: Interrogating the Politics of Sport for All

Michael Gard, Rylee A. Dionigi, and Claudio Dionigi

Introduction

There is something slightly ironic about Sport for All as an aspiration or policy setting. Stripped of this irony it implies that everyone can or perhaps should benefit from participating in sport. This is sport as “motherhood”, an idea about which no objection could be raised and which has been elevated to something approaching a human right. As a result, during the twentieth century the idea of women or cultural and sexual minorities, older or disabled people having limited access to sporting

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experiences came to be seen as pressing social problems in many parts of the world. In contrast, it is difficult to imagine a similar level of agitation about people's freedom to enjoy French cooking, daytime television, chamber music or crossword puzzles, as worthy as these activities might seem. Sport, it seems, exists in a recreational category all of its own.

On the other hand, Sport for All reminds us, albeit inadvertently, how discursively flexible sport is. For many of its advocates, sport is a kind of “universal acid” (Dennett 1995) with a wide range of social, cultural, economic, medical and political applications; a solution, as it were, for all problems. Of course, we acknowledge that this discursive flexibility—perhaps “promiscuity” captures it more accurately—has been observed by many scholars and commentators before us (e.g., Coakley 2015; Green 2006, 2007, 2012; Nicholson et al. 2011). The tendency of advocates to overstate the benefits of sport and physical activity more generally is well known and needs to be factored into any analysis of sport as an instrument of public policy. If anything, the social policy utility of sport deserves particularly close scrutiny precisely because of its enduring discursive resonance, a fact which finds expression in the way sport and sporting people continue to be used by advertisers and policy makers alike as symbols of health, success, desirability and moral worth. The irony of Sport for All, in other words, is that it helps us to see that no pastime—neither sport nor anything else—could ever truly be “for all”.

The element that we propose to add to the existing critiques of sports' social policy utility is to consider it within a wider socio-cultural and historical context. Our argument in this chapter will be that this context is evolving and political in both familiar and novel ways and that one of the roles that academics can and should play is to make connections between policy agendas that might seem unrelated. By highlighting the contradictions and perversities that policy making sometimes generates, we also hope to offer readers food for thought. In particular, while most of the contributions in this book are necessarily concerned with specific research and policy-related problems and agendas, our goal in this chapter is to explore some of the ways these different agendas resonate or contradict each other. That sport and physical activity policy should provide rich material for commentary and critique is unsurprising, at least to us, precisely because of the discursive promiscuity we have just described. In a context where sport can mean almost anything to anybody, the potential for instructive juxtapositions and critical comparisons is considerable.

Before moving on, a brief clarification about the word “policy” is probably necessary here. We use “policy” in this chapter as a catch-all to talk about a range of phenomena such as official government programmes and statements, educational curricula, existing and proposed public health interventions, the pronouncements of experts and even media commentary. In other words, our treatment of “policy” is concerned with the wide variety of collective and premeditated actions that different stakeholders advocate for, whether or not they are currently being enacted. More broadly, our intention here is not to analyse or argue for or against any particular policy, but to consider aspects of the broader policy landscape and how it has changed over time. Our interest is in making connections between the ways various stakeholders talk about the utility of sport and the kinds of actions that are thereby implied or realised.

Sport Policy Through History

Since its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century codification, modern sport has consistently been framed within a narrative of social utility. A large historical literature demonstrates how the Victorian period in a number of Western countries was marked by debates about the risks and rewards of encouraging people, but particularly young people, to play sport (Bachin 2001; Holt 1990; Roessner 2009). The intensity and significance of these debates is perhaps best exemplified by the shifts in thinking about the effect of sport on ruling class young men’s academic performance, personal conduct and moral rectitude. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, educational, political and religious leaders found it relatively easy to see vigorous sport as inculcating physical aggression, undermining the importance of the intellect and encouraging deceitful and over-competitive behaviour. Of course, sport’s folk origins, especially in the form of team games, also gave it a vulgar and brutish reputation amongst those whose voices were most likely to be heard (Collins 2009). It was a short step from here to claiming that certain forms of sport were nothing less than a threat to society.

But as the Industrial Revolution continued to reconfigure work, living conditions and social relations, and produce new kinds of social problems, sport could be seen in a new light. The domestication and gentrifi-

cation of organised sport, crossed with new worries about the effect of city life and office work on the virility of ruling class men, produced the idea of sport as the antidote to, rather than the cause of, social breakdown (Crotty 1998; Kimmel 1990). As the nineteenth century progressed, ambivalence lost ground to the “cult of athleticism” and sport gradually cemented its place within dominant ideas about how to organise, educate and govern society.

Moving into the twentieth century, the rise of muscular Christianity, eugenics and fascism are all in their own way further examples of social movements that invested enormous symbolic value in the athletic male body (Cashman 2002; Gagen 2004). This is not to suggest that sport was the only or even the primary vehicle through which these movements imagined social order being shaped or maintained. At the same time, it is undeniably true that in each of these cases sports training and participation acquired a symbolic potency that translated into actual social policies, such as the creation of the various Fascist “youth movements” across the world (Mangan 2000).

The post WWII period continued to produce an array of new aspirations and, therefore, policy agendas for sport in different parts of the world. In parts of Eastern-Bloc Europe sport became an important tool of cold-war diplomacy and ideological warfare (Green and Oakley 2001). Likewise in the United States, for example, anxieties about the physical decline of American youth in comparison to Europe was the catalyst for the creation of the President’s Council on Youth Fitness in 1956, an initiative which, at least rhetorically, linked sports participation with the defence of the nation (McElroy 2008; Wrynn 2011). More recently, the pursuit of success in international sporting competitions, such as the Olympics and football World Cup, appears increasingly to be seen as an important policy objective for “developing countries” anxious to be seen as mature members of the international community of nations. That is, sport continues to be a popular policy instrument in the prosecution of economic, political and cultural nationalisms.

There is no space here to discuss the efficacy, effectiveness or the merits of these evolving policy agendas or the way they are themselves reflections of existing socio-political conditions. What matters for now is to register the point that sports policies are always operating on multiple levels;

explicit and implicit, intentional and unintentional, benign and malign. As many scholars of policy in a range of fields argue, a policy is never just one thing (Green 2006, 2007, 2012; Stein 2004).

From the Few to the Many

One—albeit problematic—way of glossing the history of sports participation in the industrialised West since the nineteenth century is via a narrative of gradual democratisation. By and large, codified competitive sports were created *for* rich white males and constructed as either inappropriate or dangerous for everyone else. Over time, other groups have claimed sport as a legitimate site for recreation, personal development and social advancement. To provide just one example, Kirk (1998, 2001) has documented the importation of competitive sports from elite private schools to the curriculum of government schools in England and Australia during the first half of the twentieth century. In essence, educational progressives of this period argued that it was unfair that only the children of the rich were able to benefit from the edifying effect of running, hitting, kicking, catching and throwing.

The material and rhetorical democratisation of sport has taken many forms, a striking example of which is the emergence of Sport for All, an idea born in Europe in the late 1960s (Van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2008). Since then, Sport for All has become both a slogan used by those in favour of spreading sports participation as widely as possible and an official policy setting that elevates sport to the level of a human right (e.g., the International Olympic Committee 2013). It is worth dwelling for a moment on this historical transformation. While it appears that all human societies have engaged in physical play, this seems a very long way from the codified, rule-bound and generally competitive thing that sport became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and which was exported to the world via events such as the Olympic Games and the football World Cup. In short, the modern idea that sports participation is something that no human should be denied would, until a few decades ago, have seemed radical and probably wrong-headed to many people.

We live now at an intriguing point in this historical trajectory. On the one hand, sport has reached an unprecedented position of pre-eminence across the world as a form of social policy. A range of scholars have described the sheer breadth of social problems that sport has or is currently being used to solve, from juvenile delinquency and ethnic disharmony to obesity-, lifestyle- and age-related diseases and the social integration of people with disabilities (Bailey et al. 2009; Fusco 2012; Gard and Dionigi 2016; Nicholson et al. 2011). At the same time, such policies and the agendas underlying them are conflicting, paradoxical and perverse. To demonstrate these contradictions we use trends in contemporary sport policy in Australia as a framework for discussion. In particular, we draw on a report produced for the Australian Government's Australian Sports Commission (ASC) that 'identifies six megatrends likely to shape the Australian sports sector over the next 30 years' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 1). Below we focus on the trends related to: 'A perfect fit' and 'From extreme to mainstream' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 1), by discussing the decrease in popularity of traditional club sport amongst some youth and the rise in lifestyle and/or fitness sport participation; 'Everybody's game' and 'More than sport' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 2), through highlighting the radical medicalisation of sport, the increase in sport promotion to toddlers, older people and gay and lesbian communities, the increase in school sport funding and physical literacy education to fight obesity, and a case for increased sport funding to reduce health-care costs, and; 'New wealth, new talent' and 'Tracksuits to business suits' (Hajkowicz et al. 2013: 2), with examples of the prospect of selling our sport expertise in Asia, the commercialisation of community sport and the rising cost of sports participation and spectatorship. We also use the concept of neoliberalism as one way of understanding the complex nature of sport policy in our culture.

Neoliberalism is a nebulous, multi-faceted and contested term, but for the purposes of this chapter we draw on key theorists and philosophers such as David Harvey, Jamie Peck and Michael Sandel to connect neoliberalism (as a cultural and economic concept) with contemporary sport and physical activity participation and promotion across the lifespan. Harvey claimed:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (2005: 2)

Therefore, in terms of Sport for All, the role of policy becomes one of creating the market conditions for private interests to provide for the health and lifestyle needs of people across the lifespan. In an edited text on sport and neoliberalism, Green (2012: 48) explained that ‘... the embrace of policies for sport and physical activity by government to the degree evident over the past decade or so is unprecedented’, while Fusco (2012: 145) claimed:

Sport and physical activity have always been depicted as solutions to the “problem” of youth and urban spaces (Fusco 2007; Gagen 2000). So it is not surprising that in North America and many other industrialized countries, health discourses of childhood inactivity and obesity, which have woven their way into peoples’ consciousnesses (McDermott 2007), point to the production of sports and physical activity spaces for youth as the antidote (Active Healthy Kids Canada 2011; Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute 2011).

While sport continues to be seen as “the medicine for everyone”, concerns have been raised in policy and research about children’s increased use of “screens” and whether or not sports participation alone is “enough” to positively affect one’s overall health or “tackle childhood obesity” (see Active Healthy Kids Australia 2014; Australian Sports Commission 2015; Hastie and Trost 2002; Trost 2006). As a consequence, the promotion of lifetime physical activities to children such as running or walking with headphones and kids’ cross-fit classes at the local gym, has emerged alongside the promotion of sport (Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Part of this rhetoric includes sedentary behaviour and screen time recommendations for infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, primary/elementary school children and teenagers (e.g., in Australia it is recommended that children aged 0–5 years should not be inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, except when sleeping, and children aged 0–2 years should not undertake any screen time activities; Department of Health 2014).

Evidently, a key part of this neoliberal shift in policy across Western countries is the notion of self-responsibility for health, or the economisation and moralisation of health, from childhood to old age to reduce the cost burden of health care on the state (Aberdeen and Bye 2013; Asquith 2009; Gard et al. 2017; Harrington and Fullagar 2013; Mendes 2013; Steinbrook 2006). In addition, in his critique of neoliberalism, Peck explained that:

... in effect, neoliberalism seems often to be used as a sort of stand-in term for the political economic zeitgeist, as a no-more-than approximate proxy for a specific analysis of mechanisms or relations of social power, domination, exploitation, or alienation. The forms and registers of the phenomenon can seem almost without limit. (2010: 14)

In other words, neoliberalism is simultaneously a concept, discourse and mode of practice that pervades all aspects of society, and in what follows we provide a greater understanding of the synergy between the sport and physical activity policy discourse, sports participation among various groups of people at different life stages and the related practices of various stakeholders of sport and physical activity.

An Endlessly Flexible Discursive Resource: Sport in Australian Policy

New sport-related policies and policy directions, such as the six megatrends outlined earlier (Hajkowicz et al. 2013), are being developed because governments and other stakeholders increasingly see the sports industry as a driver of economic growth, as well as a source of foreign investment and export income. For example, economic dimensions of government sport policy directions in Australia include the potential to capitalise on the increasing population and economic growth in Asia by offering onshore and off-shore sport-related services, training, coaches, sports equipment manufacturing and sports technology (see Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Also in 2013, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) conducted the *Market segmentation for sport participation—adults* (aged 14–65 years) with market analysts, GfK Blue Moon (see www.gfk.com/

[au/Solutions/](#)) to identify ten contemporary sport consumer segments to increase sporting club membership in Australia. It recommends different types of products, messages and tones to appeal to each segment of the identified market. This report points to the decline in club sport participation in Australia, which has led some to argue that we should put more policy emphasis on the growing interest among youth in less-structured, non-mainstream lifestyle leisure pursuits (e.g., Hajkowicz et al. 2013). Some of these alternative, lifestyle and extreme sports include downhill longboard skateboarding, volcano surfing, train surfing and cliff jumping (Enright and Gard 2016; Gilchrist and Wheaton 2013; Hesselink 2008), which have attracted media attention in relation to risky or criminal youth behaviour (e.g., a group of train surfing youths made the news in Melbourne in 2016). Also, sports that many of us may be unaware of have emerged in recent years, such as the hide and seek world championships in Italy. At the time of writing this chapter, Australian athletes are being sought to form our inaugural representative team at this international sporting event which boasts an eight-year history (Reid 2017). What we are witnessing under neoliberalism is a simultaneous celebration and fear of the increasing diversity in the meaning and types of sports available to people across the lifespan.

Another document that reflects cultural anxiety surrounding the erosion of traditional sport, a belief in the inherent goodness of sport and the use of increased sports participation to “save on health care costs” is the Confederation of Australian Sport’s (CAS 2014) submission to Government on *Maximising the potential of Australian Sport*. CAS calculates the yearly economic contribution of Australian sport to be over \$22 billion. This report claimed that:

At \$22 billion per year Sport’s economic contribution is 17 times greater than the combined total of national and state government funding of \$1.3 billion. CAS calculates that every Australian sport participant contributes almost \$1,600 to the economy each year at \$8 per sporting hour.

Australia’s sport participation contributes to the nation through: reduction in health costs; increases in workplace productivity; the building of social capital through volunteering; the elevation of personal wellbeing; and by paying taxation on sport services and products. (p. 4)

CAS believes that ‘If the Australian Government is genuine in its intent to make Australia the healthiest nation by 2020, as stated in the *National Preventative Health Strategy—the roadmap for action* (Australian Preventative Health Taskforce 2009)’ they should increase their national and state/territory funding for sport and physical activity from \$1.3 billion to \$5.5 billion a year to maximise sport’s potential (p. 4). The case being made by CAS becomes even more striking when one considers that a UK-based study found ‘there is no evidence that sport is effective as a public health intervention to improve physical health’ (Weed 2016: 559, see also Bailey et al. 2009; Green 2014). Arguably, CAS seem to be advocating for the shifting of government resources from programmes that are collectively based, such as education and welfare, to those that promote individual responsibility, such as sport and physical activity participation through private providers and increasingly corporatised sports organisations. Block and Sommers (2014: 20) would see this as an example of “reregulation” where the state is not downsized but rather re-tooled to serve the interests of private capital rather than the public good:

By the term reregulation ... we aim to push back against the belief that the success of neoliberal ideology since the mid-1970s has been matched by markets being increasingly freed from regulations and government management. On the contrary, regulations did not go away; they simply changed. Those that had previously been written to protect employees or consumers were systematically rewritten to support business interests and reduce previous restrictions on business practices.

Proponents of neoliberal policies promote self-responsibility and individualism in an effort to lower government health expenditure. The reduction of spending in areas such as health care means that more money can be siphoned off into private capital.

The increased commodification of mass sport participation among previously marginalised groups, such as the old and gay and lesbian communities, and the growth in businesses “selling” sports to all age groups, including the very young, are further examples of how neoliberalism has found its way into sport. For instance, in Chap. 1, we drew attention to just one of the many franchises that creates sporting opportunities for children as young as 16 months old (sportball.ca) under the guise of

active and healthy lifestyles. Similar programmes exist in Australia, such as Fun 4 Sports, which claims to be the:

Best sports program for children

Locally owned and a true pathway to team play!

Fun 4 Sports is proud of its quality program delivery for children aged 18 months to 7 years. We offer quality structured FUN weekly sessions to improve your child's confidence, team play and coordination. We also deliver fundamental healthy messages and the importance of practicing (which we provide the motivation to do!). (<http://fun4sports.com.au/>)

Also, Sporty Kids Australia proclaims to be “all about fun!” and promotes outdoor play. Unlike the above programme, it does not include parents in the 2–6 years sessions:

Sporty Kids has great programs for Kids aged 2.5 to 6 years

At Sporty Kids we have a variety of programs and locations so you are sure to find something that suits your busy schedule.

Our programs are aimed to teach your preschooler sporting skills, teamwork, and socialisation all while making sport fun in an awesome outdoor environment.

As we do not require a parent to participate, you get to become their biggest supporter, watching them have fun and develop from the sideline, cheering them on. (<http://www.sportykids.net.au/>)

While the above programmes may provide children and parents with many benefits, such programmes also point to the way organised, adult-led, corporate sporting structures attempt to shape, regulate and dictate early childhood play and parenting behaviours under the banner of healthy and active lifestyles. (For more on this topic see Fraser-Thomas and Safai, this volume).

In other contexts, such as sports participation amongst previously marginalised groups, academics have explained how, despite being grounded in participatory and inclusive discourses, the Gay Games has become financially exclusive and most participants are gay, white, middle-class men

(Davidson 2013; Litchfield and Osborne, this volume; Symons 2010). Dionigi and Litchfield (this volume) draw attention to the growing marketisation of mega multi-sport events for middle-aged and older people, such as the World Masters Games and the Pan Pacific Masters Games. They show how the traditionally local, club-based Masters sport movement has become a 'middle-class playground' built on the needs and desires of the already-active and privileged individual (many of whom wish to relive their youth through sports participation at increasingly commercialised major events). At the same time, such events claim to promote Active Ageing for all and are grounded in Healthy Lifestyle ideals, the latter of which are not reflected in the actions of Masters sport participants who smoke in between games, drink alcohol immediately after their daytime game and consume large amounts of alcohol over the course of several social events during the games (see Dionigi and Litchfield, this volume). We are not saying that such practices are any less meaningful than any other social practice, it is the juxtaposition of such practices at a sporting event that was established and justified on Sport for All and Healthy Lifestyles discourses that we wish to expose.

Among other things, the above examples show the increased appeal of sport among diverse groups, as well as how sport has become radically medicalised as a policy instrument to promote self-responsibility for health across the lifespan and increasingly corporatised. The problem is that not all of us have the resources, ability, knowledge and/or opportunity to take responsibility of our health through sport or physical activity, particularly the poor, old and uneducated. So, programmes and policies, such as those described above, that are embedded in the neoliberal argument for personal responsibility for health and lifestyle choices, marginalise and stigmatise those who cannot or do not want to be physically active. With respect to older people and sport, Dionigi (2016, 2017a, 2017b) explains how in the context of an overbearing healthy and active ageing agenda such policy action could heighten individual and cultural fear or denial of the biological ageing process by making ill-health and immobility in later life more difficult to accept than it otherwise would have been without lifelong sports promotion and participation. Masters athletes, a population who tend to identify themselves through the effective use and functioning of a sporting body, and a group who are answering the call to remain active across the lifespan, not only express fear of age-related diseases and disabilities, but typically argue that some kind of

physical activity is important for everyone as they age. Positioning sport and physical activity as a means to age well and as a 'cure' to an ageing body might convince some people that they can avoid old age by remaining active, which ultimately represents a denial of the realities of physiological ageing and could be maladaptive in old age (Biggs 1997, 2014; Dionigi 2010a, b; Dionigi et al. 2013; Gilleard and Higgs 2013). More broadly, Gard et al. (2017) discuss how the expectation of sport and physical activity participation for all across the lifespan can widen the social gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' and potentially lead to cuts in welfare support for the aged.

Neoliberal policies which have dominated over the past 30–40 years have resulted in increased income and wealth inequality, as described by Thomas Piketty (2014) in his seminal work entitled *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Rising income and wealth inequality has led to an increasingly fragmented populace, where the haves no longer mingle with the have nots (Sandel 2009) and where (as shown in this chapter and others in this volume) some can afford to participate in organised sport and others cannot. One example from youth sport is cricket in Australia, which has been commodified and is increasingly only accessible to young people with the means to pay registration fees and purchase equipment, while this same sport disappears from state school sports programmes. While there may have always been a separation of the wealthy and their sports from the commoners, such as the wealthy playing polo or fox hunting while the poor played football or soccer, now every sport is commodified and sold, from registration to t-shirts and souvenirs. This trend is not only seen in youth sport, but also in the Masters movement, the Gay Games and the Paralympics with those who can afford to participate and those who cannot being separated, distanced and increasingly alienated from each other.

Neoliberalism produces new class divisions that widen the gap between those that have the means, ability and desire to play sport and those who do not. Peck (2010: 212) describes an analogous occurrence in the rise of a Creative Class:

The problem is that the Creative Class, having become a uniquely restless factor of production, motivated by extrinsic rewards and the 'pursuit of happiness,' is apparently sorting itself into like-minded enclaves, with little concern for the wider social consequences, maybe little concern for wider society.

To Peck, those in the Creative Class argue that anyone can rise to their level, ignoring the barriers to social mobility caused by rising income inequality and the privileges that got them there. The danger with such divisions in the case of Sport for All is that the class of “active people” assume that everyone can be like them if they merely “get off the couch” or stop being “lazy”, as Gard et al. (2017) found among older Masters athletes. This way of thinking is problematic, not only in economic terms, but in a civic sense—it is divisive and corrosive to commonality and class mixing (Sandel 2012).

Inequality also has an effect on the spectating of sport. The wealthy are increasingly set apart from the general population at sporting events, with roped-off sections and corporate boxes, which has been described by Sandel (2012) as the ‘Skyboxification of American life’ or the marketisation of everything. This separation in sport participation and spectatorship is evident, albeit to a lesser degree, in Australia and it contributes to what Sandel (2009) calls the hollowing out of the public sphere. Here Sandel means that because the rich and poor are living, working, schooling, shopping and playing in different spaces, public services worsen because the affluent no longer use such services, including public transport, playgrounds, parks, community sport and recreation centres, so the rich become less prepared to support them with taxes. With ‘skyboxification’ comes a vicious spiral in which public services fall into neglect and further disuse, community solidarity declines and calls are made to remove more funds from the public realm (Sandel 2009, 2012).

At the same time, we have seen an increase in public funding for school sport in Australia (see Australian Sports Commission (ASC) 2010). For example, since 2015 the Australian Government has committed 160 million dollars ‘to help schools to increase children’s participation in sport, and to connect children with community sport’ under the *Sporting Schools* programme which ‘is part of the Federal Government’s commitment to tackle increasing levels of obesity, particularly among children’ (see www.sporting-schools.gov.au/news/Playing-the-Game). This initiative is grounded in the commonly accepted rationale that ‘Australians are living increasingly sedentary lives’ (see <https://soundcloud.com/australian-sports-commission-ais/sporting-schools-a-success-story>). Sport in schools is perceived as another easy solution to a complex problem (obesity), with minimal expenditure needed from the state. The *Sporting Schools* programme is run in over 70% of Australian primary schools and in 2016 an ASC evaluation claimed it to

be ‘well on track’, despite no discussion on why or which 20–30% of schools are not involved (see <https://soundcloud.com/australian-sports-commission-ais/sporting-schools-a-success-story>). In addition, in 2017 the NSW (state) Government in Australia introduced an annual \$100 active kids rebate for school-aged children involved in organised sport—another example of pandering to the already active, privileged individual—which will make no difference to the lives of the children/families receiving it nor population activity rates or health outcomes. Alongside this funding is a de-emphasis of sport in schools in place of an increased emphasis on physical literacy and the promotion of lifelong physical activity participation (Active Healthy Kids Australia 2014, 2016). Older Australians are also encouraged to maintain sport- and physical-activity participation, as evident in reports to government bodies and government recommendations (Brown et al. 2005; Van Uffelen et al. 2015).

Of course, initiatives which seek to promote sport- and physical-activity participation to improve public health outcomes among people who do not undertake sport, particularly as a person ages, are problematic due to the randomness of many age-related diseases, the inevitability of the physiological ageing process and the socio-cultural determinants of health outcomes. If funds that privilege sport are used at the expense of investing in other non-sport programmes, such as public housing, aged care services, education and welfare, then the outcome can be more harmful than beneficial to population health as the responsibility for whole-of-life maintenance shifts from the state to the individual. Our point is that sports participation is just another way (among thousands of other ways) for people to enrich their lives and find meaning or joy in play and movement. There is no need for sport to be in policy—it should not be positioned as a health imperative for all, but as a leisure option for people to experience, just like French cooking and crossword puzzles.

The Future of Sport?

It is hardly an insight to note that sport has historically been recruited to solve a wide range of social policy problems. The emergence of neoliberalism in sport policy and practice has turned sport into an enterprise which involves selling “Western” expertise overseas, profiting from vari-

ous age groups and segments of the population, or finding market solutions (with moral “healthy lifestyle” underpinnings) to save money on health-care expenditure through increased sport and physical activity participation across the lifespan. These strategies and so-called solutions to the ageing of populations and increased rates of lifestyle diseases, obesity and/or social alienation, which are communicated through policy, become an accepted way of thinking about the usefulness and purpose of sport in our lives. As Harvey explained:

Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has persuasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world. (2005: 3)

Programmes, documents, discourses and ideas like those discussed in this chapter not only shape the future of sport policy, but indicate that in some cases, sport advocates and sportspeople believe that promoting sport and physical activity is just plain common-sense and sports participation is inherently beneficial for all—a situation in which ‘sport stakeholders either do not appreciate or do not accept, that the effectiveness of sport as a public health intervention is not proven’ (Weed 2016: 561, see also Coakley 2015; Coalter 2013; Green 2006, 2007, 2012, 2014; Green and Houlihan 2006; Sam 2009).

For instance, in May 2017 the Australian Minister for Sport (who, tellingly, is also the Minister for Health) announced the Australian Government’s development of a National Sports Plan - ‘a long-term strategy for the whole of sport [that] will examine four key pillars of participation, performance, prevention through physical activity, and integrity,’ (see http://www.sport.gov.au/news/asc_news/story_659356_national_sports_plan). The Minister claimed that:

The Commonwealth makes a significant contribution to Australian sport and the Plan will help to inform clear policy objectives across the entire sector.

Australians love sport. It is one of the defining characteristics of our culture and it is in our DNA.

We come together to play sport at local ovals, fields, courts, parks and beaches. We jump out of bed on a Saturday morning for junior sport and flock to the footy, netball and countless other sports to support our sporting champions. (http://www.ausport.gov.au/news/asc_news/story_659356_national_sports_plan)

While this rhetoric is not new nor specific to Australia, the assumption being made - that all Australians are genetically and culturally engineered to love, play, organise or watch sport - is absurd, to say the least. Yet, it is an assumption that is shaping our sport policy into the future. Therefore, understanding the shifting discursive resources recruited to create and frame social problems and sport's role in solving them remains an important task for scholars.

Polices are examples of culture in action—in this case, a culture that values sport and fears ageing. We have described some of the ways in which, far from being just one thing, sport's discursive flexibility continues to be expressed through its recruitment in a dizzying array of policy projections and agendas. Sport's mutation over time has allowed it to be many things to many people and public health 'crises' provide fertile ground for hyperbole and self-interested reasoning. As such, the Sport for All concept is reflective of the political and cultural context of its time. Under neoliberal capitalism, which is itself a contradictory and contested ideology, sport, and in particular the Sport for All mantra, is both a site of resistance and a site of conformity, an attempt to address growing health concerns while simultaneously creating new social issues, as well as a creator of new communities and a contributor to the erosion of the public sphere. Therefore, as academics and future or current sport and physical activity service providers, policy makers and practitioners, we must ask ourselves—are we valuing and enabling all forms of leisure and lifestyle across the lifespan through our (over)emphasis on Sport for All? How will the way we promote, shape and experience sport affect the way we age and live our lives? After all, what appears to be the most important difference between the past and present sport policies, and therefore the thing most worthy of explanation, is their increasing discursive ambition to re-shape the lives of all citizens, regardless of age or social circumstance.

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Part II

Early Childhood, Youth and Sport

5

Tykes and ‘Timbits’: A Critical Examination of Organized Sport Programs for Preschoolers

Jessica Fraser-Thomas and Parissa Safai

Over the past several decades, there has been a trend towards sport participation at increasingly younger ages across western nations (De Knop et al. 1996). While systematic tracking of preschoolers’ involvement in organized sport is limited, growth in community sponsored programs (e.g., Timbit Minor Sport Programs) and for-profit program offerings (e.g., Canada’s SportBall franchise) beginning as young as toddlerhood has been significant. Registration numbers with national sport organizations also offer insight into high participation levels, with enrolments up to age six years sometimes making up as much as 45% of overall membership (e.g., Gymnastics Ontario 2014; Ontario Minor Hockey Association 2013).

While there has been a growing interest and concern surrounding preschooler physical activity in recent years (e.g., Gagné and Harnois 2014;

In Canada, Timbits™ are popular mini-donuts from the iconic Tim Hortons coffee chain. They are also the name bestowed upon participants in the Timbits Minor Sports Program, a Tim Hortons™ sponsored community program for children between the ages of four and eight years all across the country.

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Timmons et al. 2007), attention to preschooler sport has been limited. Definitions of sport typically emphasize elements of gaining fitness, learning specialized skills, and engaging in competition, as regulated by an organizing body (e.g., Sport Canada 2013), while physical activity includes any movement that increases heart rate, breathing, and requires energy expenditure (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology; CSEP 2015). As such, it is often presumed that all sport involves physical activity, but there are unique parameters of sport that distinguish it from physical activity. Some policy documents have hinted towards this relationship among preschoolers. For example, the *Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines* for the early years emphasizes the importance of developing movement skills in diverse contexts, including community, games, and sports (CSEP 2012), while Timmons and colleagues' (2007) seminal review entitled "Physical activity for preschool children—how much and how?" spoke about the role of physical activity being enhanced by adult facilitation, modeling, and feedback to provide mastery experiences (see also Coakley and Donnelly 2009; Gagné and Harnois 2014). Interestingly, the only policy document to directly address preschooler sport participation in relation to healthy development was put forward nearly two decades ago by the American Academy of Pediatrics (1992), and actually discouraged organized sport participation altogether, recommending: "readiness to participate in organized sports should be determined individually, based on the child's (not the parent's) eagerness to participate, and subsequently, enjoyment of the activity. Children are unlikely to be ready before age 6 years" (p. 1003).

Given the large number of preschoolers participating in organized sport, the unanswered questions regarding the role of sport in optimizing preschoolers' physical activity and overall development, coupled with a lack of current policies addressing this issue, a more comprehensive understanding of preschoolers' sport is necessary. In this chapter, we examine the perceived objectives and beneficial outcomes of preschooler sport, while also considering questionable or concerning practices embedded within preschoolers' participation. We begin by outlining existing frameworks, which serve to better understand preschooler sport, specifically: (a) objectives of children's sport (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011); (b) Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD; Canadian Sport For

Life 2015); and (c) Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP; Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011). We then present the findings of the original research conducted among preschooler parents, children, and child-care providers, addressing their perceptions of these key issues. In so doing, we highlight the need for further research to best optimize preschoolers' development through sport—a field that remains in its infancy. We also question the relevance of organized sport for preschoolers, given the limited evidence of children's positive development within this context. Finally, given that the current trends in participation are unlikely to reverse, we conclude by integrating participants' suggestions to make preliminary recommendations for improved preschooler sport programming.

Foundations for Understanding Preschooler Sport Participation Objectives of Children's Sport

Sport has been proposed to accomplish three important objectives in relation to children's development (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011): (a) offer opportunities for physical activity, leading to improved physical health; (b) develop motor skills, serving as a foundation for lifelong sport participation and/or physical activity; and (c) facilitate psychosocial development and life skills (e.g., confidence, leadership, and character). While there is growing evidence supporting sport's role in facilitating these outcomes among older children and adolescents (e.g., Eime et al. 2013; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005; Kjønnsen et al. 2009), only limited research has been conducted among preschoolers.

The frameworks of the LTAD (CS4L 2015) and DMSP (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011) further guide our understanding of the objectives and outcomes of preschoolers' sport participation. While neither model focuses specifically on preschooler sport, both propose trajectories to optimize children's development through sport, and are considered in a complimentary manner, given the LTAD's role in providing direction to sport systems, and the DMSP's foundations in empirical research and integration of key theoretical concepts relevant to preschooler sport.

Long-Term Athlete Development Model

The LTAD (CS4L 2015) is an applied sport programming framework adopted by national sport organizations in Canada.¹ The LTAD proposes that children begin their sport journey from infancy through the *Active Start* phase from ages 0 to 6 years. *Active Start* focuses on children's development of physical literacy, defined as "moving with confidence and competence in a wide variety of activities and environments that develop the whole person" (Mandigo et al. 2009: 28). It is suggested that children in this stage be introduced to unstructured active play to develop their *ABCs* of movement (i.e., Agility, Balance, Coordination, Speed), which provides foundations for later sport skills development; they should see physical activity as a fun and exciting part of everyday life. Following the *Active Start* phase, children move through two additional stages focused on physical literacy (*FUNDamentals* and *Learning to Train*, ages 6–12 years), and may then choose to follow a path to athletic excellence (*Train to Train*, *Train to Compete*, and *Train to Win* during adolescence and adulthood), or recreation-based physical activity (*Active for Life*, beginning at any age). Interestingly, the issue of organized sport involvement during the *Active Start* phase is not directly addressed by the LTAD. While the play-based principles of the *Active Start* phase could be interpreted to suggest that children need not engage in organized sports, the mere inclusion of the stage within the national sport organization's directional plan indirectly suggests that organized sport for children ages 0–6 years is a pre-requisite for later sport involvement.

Developmental Model of Sport Participation

The DMSP (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011) is the most prominent conceptual framework of athlete development in the literature (Bruner et al. 2010), based on extensive research with sport participants of diverse ages and competition levels. The model proposes three sport development trajectories, resulting in different probable outcomes aligning with proposed youth sport objectives. Of particular interest is the model's suggested entry into sport at the age of six years, supporting recommendations by

the American Academy of Pediatrics (1992) but in contrast to growing trends of involvement. Despite preschoolers' exclusion from the model, numerous key concepts relevant to preschooler sport are proposed.

First, the *Sampling Years* form the foundation of two of the DMSP's trajectories (i.e., *Recreational Participation Through Sampling*; *Elite Performance Through Sampling*). The *Sampling Years* are associated with generally positive probable outcomes (i.e., health, motor skills, psychosocial development), and characterized by children's participation in a variety of sports where the focus is primarily on deliberate play. Deliberate play's inherent emphasis on enjoyment, flexible age-adapted rules, and children's autonomous engagement (Côté and Hay 2002) conceptually aligns with unorganized physical activity and free play, which are associated with young children's positive physical, psychological, social, and cognitive development (Burdette and Whitaker 2005; Ginsburg 2007).

Early Specialization forms the foundation of a third trajectory of the DMSP (i.e., *Elite Performance Through Early Specialization*) where children focus on a primary sport from a young age, possibly on a year-round basis, with deliberate practice (Ericsson et al. 1993) forming a significant portion of their sport activity time. Deliberate practice activities are proposed to require effort, generate no immediate rewards, be motivated by the goal of improving performance, and offer the most effective learning, in turn leading to performance success. While the early specialization trajectory is associated with many positive probable outcomes (e.g., involvement in high performance sport, positive psychosocial development), it is also associated with many potential costs (i.e., dropout, injury, negative psychosocial development).

Original Research

The original data presented below comes as part of a larger study examining the development of preschool-aged children through sport, with an additional focus on the role of the Olympic Games in influencing young children's sport participation patterns and psychosocial development. Data presented in this chapter does not include any of the findings pertaining to the influence of the Olympics.

Participants included 19 parents of preschoolers, 8 childcare providers, and 57 preschoolers, recruited through 16 childcare centers located in three diverse urban centers in Ontario, Canada (populations approximately 2.5 million, 700,000, and 20,000). While an in-depth discussion of socio-economic constraints on preschoolers' engagement in sport and physical activity falls beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that 5 of the 16 childcare centers provided financial subsidies to families, resulting in participants from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. The final sample included some diversity in gender (including two fathers, one male childcare provider, and an equal number of male and female preschoolers), sport involvement (i.e., children involved in 0–4 organized sport activities), and family size (half of parents had preschoolers that were first/only children). The most commonly cited organized sport activities included swimming, gymnastics, soccer, and skating, with some preschoolers also involved in other activities including lacrosse, hockey, basketball, baseball, dance, and sportball.² While definitions of the term preschooler have been represented by inconsistent chronological ages (see Tremblay et al. 2012: 351), we included children aged 2–5 years, given that inherent within the term “preschooler” is the notion that children are not yet school-aged and in Ontario, children are mandated to attend school beginning in Grade 1 (~age six) (Ministry of Education 2014). Final participant numbers were based on attaining a sufficiently diverse sample, while also aiming to assure thematic saturation.

Data was collected among the majority of participants at two time points (spring/summer of 2012 and 2013) to better gauge preschoolers' sport involvement over time. The proposed objectives of children's sport (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011), and key concepts of the LTAD (CS4L 2015) and DMSP (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011) collectively guided our exploration of perceived objectives, beneficial outcomes, and potentially questionable or concerning practices associated with preschooler sport participation. Parents and childcare providers' interview questions focused on preschoolers' experiences in physical activity and organized sport and their development through these experiences; the second interview also involved inquiry regarding changes over time. In the children's focus groups, drawing was used as a tool to facilitate conversation related to play and sport, given past research showing small groups and interactive activities as effective strategies (Porcellato et al. 2002). A total of 17 focus groups were

conducted (i.e., 7 in 2012 and 10 in 2013) in childcare settings (i.e., parents were not present), with group size ranging from 2 to 4 children. Probes and follow-up questions were used throughout interviews and focus groups to encourage participants to expand upon their statements. All audio data were transcribed verbatim and examined through constant comparative technique (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Content analysis was used to code and break down the data, and subsequently bring the data back together in meaningful ways. In analyzing focus group data, we used an inductive approach, given the exploratory nature of the research and children's focus on their lived experiences; children's drawings served as complementary data, which guided and enhanced the richness of child–researcher conversations. In analyzing interview data we used primarily an inductive approach; however, we also utilized a deductive approach, given the parents' and childcare providers' focus on perceived objectives and outcomes of preschooler sport, and previous frameworks informing these issues (i.e., LTAD, CS4L 2015; DMSP, Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011). All names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

Perceived Objectives and Outcomes of Preschooler Sport

Parents, childcare providers, and preschoolers discussed their perceptions of the objectives and outcomes of organized sport for preschoolers, in line with the three proposed objectives of children's sport participation (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011). While some focus was placed on the role of sport in facilitating preschoolers' physical health and motor skills for prolonged sport/ physical activity involvement (the first and second objectives), participants spoke most prominently about sport as a platform for preschoolers' psychosocial and life skill development (the third objective).

Physical Health

While participants unequivocally emphasized the health benefits of preschoolers' unstructured physical activity (e.g., going to the park, riding a bike) in the forms of energy expenditure, fitness, sleep patterns, and

subsequent positive behavior patterns, when asked specifically about the benefits of organized sport, the issue of physical health was rarely raised. Several participants offered insight into why they felt this may be the case. For example, Siobhan (mother of five- and three-year-old girls) suggested unstructured physical activity “exposes them to a lot of different activities and keeps them naturally physically active,” but that physical activity levels within many organized programs was actually quite limited as “once they get to a certain age they are standing and waiting in line a lot.” Similarly, Hillary, a mother of three young children chose not to re-enroll her children in organized sports, as she asked herself, “Are they really getting a whole lot out of it?” and decided, “it was actually easy to make that switch cause I knew I could easily fill their time [with unstructured physical activity].” Additionally, many child participants often showed a dislike of the structured activities within organized programs: “I don’t like when Mr. Ripley says that I have to run around there because I get tired. Sometimes I need to walk” (a four-year-old girl). Further, when asked their “favourite part” of an organized sport, children often failed to answer the question, instead stating their “favourite part” involved unstructured activity with their parents: “going [skating] with my mom and dad” (a three-year old girl), and “playing [soccer] with my Daddy” (a four-year-old boy).

Although some sport-based interventions have shown small positive changes in physical health (Fitzgibbon et al. 2005), our findings give additional credence to past work suggesting that organized sports may not in fact increase overall physical activity levels (Finn et al. 2002). Interestingly, while increased preschooler sport participation has aligned with growing concern surrounding preschoolers’ physical activity, recent studies suggest only half of the preschoolers in Western countries are engaging in sufficient activity for health benefits (Tucker 2008) and that preschoolers spend up to 80% of waking hours being inactive (e.g., Pate et al. 2008; Reilly et al. 2004).

Alexandra, a childcare provider outlined her thoughts on why parents are enrolling preschool-aged children in organized sport despite this apparent disconnect with physical health:

Fifteen or twenty years ago, children used to get their activity during the day, and then go play in the park for a bit, and come home. You wouldn’t

have that structure of going to a baseball game or practice. But parents are involved now because they have to be involved. You can't let your child go off for two hours on their own and play in the park anymore. You have to supervise. So if you're going to do that, you think you might as well take them to a structured game to learn some skills.

Evidently, more research is required to better understand the role of organized sport in potentially addressing, or further accentuating inactivity concerns among preschoolers.

Motor Skills

In line with Alexandra's suggestion that organized sport offers a context for motor skill development, some parents highlighted the benefits in line with physical literacy and the ABCs of movement (LTAD 2015). Hailey outlined the gross motor skills she felt her three-year-old daughter had developed: "In gymnastics, she learned climbing, jumping, summersaults. In dance class, how to skip and gallop. Silly things, but I don't know if I would have taught her those in such a specific way at home." Similarly, Kara outlined her twins' (a four-year-old boy and a girl) soccer skill development: "One thing is coordination. The more they practice, the better they get. Just from that half hour over a few weeks, they have more control over the ball, they can keep their balance better, playing and throwing and catching." These parents clearly believed organized sport provided unique opportunities for motor skill development that could not be facilitated at home through unstructured physical activity. Some parents more covertly expressed these beliefs, explaining that they were "investing [their] time in [their child]" (Brooke), and that "the things he's doing are beyond some of the other kids in his class" (Charlene), while eagerly tracking their children's progress.

Yet in contrast to these assertions, many parents genuinely questioned the value of teaching motor skills through organized sports at such a young age, suggesting that the excessive structure and feedback may be detrimental to children's optimal skills development. Janice, a former professional dancer and mother of a three-year-old boy was holding back on his organized physical activities and explained her rationale: "I have a

real problem with three-year-olds in ballet. So much research shows that the more codified movement that they have at a young age, the less creative they are.” Hailey also noted with regard to her daughter, “If you’re always correcting her and telling her she did something wrong, she won’t do it again. She will shut down if she is pushed and feels wrong.” While we were somewhat surprised that motor skill development did not consistently fare prominently in parents’ reasons for enrolling their preschoolers in sport, Janice and Hailey’s concerns have been supported by recent research showing an association between some forms of organized physical activity and decreased motor skill abilities (Barnett et al. 2013), in turn suggesting unstructured physical activity, which allows for more spontaneous active play, creativity, and free movement, may be more beneficial to children’s overall development (Burdette and Whitaker 2005; Ginsburg 2007).

Further, given the recent popularization in the concepts of deliberate practice and early specialization (Gladwell 2007), we anticipated parents’ eagerness for their children to learn motor skills early and subsequently be successful, could be the root of many preschoolers’ early sport involvement. One explanation may be that the parents were simply not comfortable acknowledging that “getting a leg up” in their child’s performance was a foundation for their child’s involvement; they did not want to be perceived as “that pushy parent” in a climate built on fun and enjoyment. Participants seemed quick to judge others for this: “I’m already seeing parents on the sidelines being really passionate about their child’s performance and not seeing the bigger picture” (Siobhan). Alternatively, we recognize that our small sample size of participants precludes representativeness and thus an alternative explanation may be that we spoke to a group of like-minded individuals already sensitive to such issues in sport.

Prolonged Physical Activity and/or Sport Involvement

The second objective of children’s sport also speaks to motor skills as foundation for lifelong physical activity and/or sport engagement. This goal appeared highly valued by parents and a key rationale for enrolling

preschoolers in organized sport. As Brooke (mother of a three-year-old boy) suggested, “for us, it’s more exposing him to it and rounding him out. Down the road, he will tell us what he likes the best but, at this point, we are just showing him all the choices he can make in the future.” Similarly, Rebecca (mother of a four-year-old girl) emphasized, “I figure as a parent, it’s my job to help her find her passion, so we’re just exploring these kinds of things.” While some research suggests early diverse sport involvement is associated with more positive long-term engagement (Kjønniksen et al. 2009), further research is necessary to determine if this contention holds when children as young as preschool-aged are introduced to organized sport. In turn, it will be essential that key guidelines (i.e., American Academy of Pediatrics 1992) and models (i.e., LTAD, CS4L 2015; DMSP, Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011) are revisited to assure proposed ages of initiation into organized sport (e.g., six years) remain consistent with emerging preschooler research regarding optimal short and long-term developmental outcomes. Conditions surrounding preschoolers’ introduction into organized sport may also require further consideration. For example, one childcare provider expressed her support for early exposure, but emphasized children’s important role in initiation:

They have to start off by showing their interest. “This is what I want to do.” Then you can build on that right? I think you could get the most inactive child active if they’re engaged and interested in what they are doing.
(Katrina)

Psychosocial and Life Skill Development

Participants’ most substantive discussion surrounding preschoolers’ organized sport involvement related to facilitation of psychosocial development and life skills. Specifically, in line with past research among youth (Camiré et al. 2011, 2012; Gould and Carson 2008), four key themes emerged related to: (a) interpersonal skills; (b) competence and confidence; (c) being a team member; and (d) learning about winning and losing. Below we discuss only the first three themes, given space restrictions and the complexity of the final theme.

Interpersonal Skills

Some of the most commonly perceived benefits of preschoolers' sport involvement related to being with other children, meeting new friends, interacting in a group setting, and developing shared interests. Participants also suggested sport offered a unique environment for developing listening skills and focus, learning to follow instructions, share, and take turns, while facilitating discipline, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills. As Rebecca suggested, "The idea of playing soccer is almost secondary to being on the field, able to focus among friends, while listening, trying to learn a new concept of kicking the ball properly, while trying to understand 'I should probably share the ball.'"

There were however inconsistent perceptions of how these interpersonal skills were fostered in preschooler sport. While some participants suggested skills developed automatically through participation, others proposed more deliberate adult role modeling and facilitation was required (cf., Coakley and Donnelly 2009; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005; Gagné and Harnois 2014). For example, Kiera explained how she maximized teachable moments with her three-year-old son:

When he gets frustrated I try to teach him that that's not an acceptable kind of reaction to something. "Let's take a deep breath. Let's walk away. Let's think about what we can do to make it better and move forward." So I try to teach him to take that time—that short minute."

While parents were cautious in their criticisms, they highlighted many accounts of coaches' failure to facilitate such teachable moments, suggesting "a lack of knowledge on how to teach the younger ages in the sport" (Charlene). For example, one parent recounted her child's team doing a post-game handshake, saying "bad game" to all their opponents, with the situation going completely unaddressed by the coach, while child focus groups yielded no data related to coaches' facilitation of interpersonal growth.

Thus, while the development of interpersonal skills was often assumed or perceived to be a beneficial outcome of preschooler sport, our interpretation of findings suggests a different account. Kara, a parent of four-

year-old twins, made an interesting comparison between her preschooler's sport and childcare contexts, clearly perceiving the sport program leaders as lacking expertise in interpersonal skill development:

Their daycare is fabulous. The teachers just really know how to work with kids and how to help them work out their conflicts together and express their own needs in a respectful way. Their soccer coaches are good but they are a little overwhelmed by having ten 4-year olds. And the swimming coaches are great at teaching swimming, but their method of interaction with 4 year olds is to get them all hyped up. So for personal development, the daycare teachers are way ahead of soccer and swimming. There is nothing that is going to compare with what they get at daycare.

In line with Kara's experience, sport did not appear to offer a unique opportunity for preschoolers to engage socially with other children. More specifically, all the preschoolers involved in this study were enrolled in childcare, meaning that they had ample other opportunities to socialize away from parents. Further, while sport appeared to offer a context ripe for teachable moments, these seemed to be grossly overlooked by coaches. Kara's comments above are particular cause for reflection, as she undermines a key reason why parents seemed to enroll their children in sport. In sum, it appears that the LTAD's (2015) aim to "develop the whole person" may not be satisfied through current organized sport programs for preschoolers, and that further research is required to determine if sport can indeed facilitate interpersonal skills at this young age, and if so, to better understand the underlying mechanisms and processes which might allow this to successfully occur.

Competence and Confidence

A second reason commonly cited for preschoolers' involvement in organized sport related to the development of confidence, through the emergence of sport competence. Lara perceived that skill and ability improvements facilitated this process in her four-year-old boy, "He likes getting so much better—going from the point where you're kind of fumbling on the ice most of the time—to where you're being able to skate

and shoot the puck.” Similarly, Hailey emphasized the value of skill mastery and its intertwined relationship with her three-year-old daughter’s enjoyment: “She is proud of her accomplishments and she has a good time. She wants to show people—like her grandparents, her cousins, or a friend who comes over—what she has learned. There’s just that aspect of mastering something.” Children also consistently spoke of their “favourite part” of organized sport being related to their accomplishments: “swimming by myself with my tummy down!” “kicking the ball,” “scoring some goals,” “running so fast!” or “doing a handstand”. These findings align with extensive reviews of youths’ motives for sport participation, which highlight physical competence (i.e., as a result of learning new skills, being accomplished, showing improvement), and enjoyment (e.g., fun, excitement, interest) as fundamental to initial and continued involvement (Weiss and Williams 2004). Children’s drawings further reinforced this theme, consistently reflecting images of children’s sport success, and positive affect associated with accomplishments.

While these findings again appear to highlight considerable value in preschoolers’ organized sport participation, it is important not to overlook alternative (negative) experiences such as lack of competence, decreased confidence, and lack of enjoyment. This was perhaps best reflected in children’s words, as they stated, “sometimes soccer is not fun,” recounting experiences of being “kicked with the soccer ball in the face,” being laughed at (e.g., “he thought it was funny”), and “feeling that “they [parents] don’t cheer.” One child simply explained, “I go on sports, but I don’t know sports.” A few parents, such as Charlotte, acknowledged these challenges and the impact they were having on the child: “I wouldn’t say she’s thinking she’s not as good, because I don’t even know if she’s connected that in her mind. I guess in her mind it’s, ‘Why is this not as fun as everything else I’ve tried?’” Charlene also recounted how perceived competence led her four-year-old son to reconsider his return to his sport the following year:

One night out of the blue he was telling [my husband], “I’m not gonna play in lacrosse next year”. We were like, “Oh, why not? You really, really enjoyed it”. He was like, “Yeah, but I could never get the ball and I couldn’t run as fast”. We reminded him, “Next year you’ll be a whole year older and you’ll be one of the bigger kids probably ... and not only that, but you’ll pick it up faster.” And then he’s like, “Oh yeah. Okay, I’ll play”.

These contrasting experiences speak to an internal struggle that many parents expressed throughout the interview process, questioning the appropriate amount of “push” they should impress upon their preschoolers. Lara outlined how perseverance led to positive outcomes among her three- and five-year-old children in skating:

I find it is the hardest thing. For a few weeks, they couldn't even stand on up on their skates. They were so frustrated. They were crying and then a couple weeks later they were skating. And I think that lesson that it was hard, but if you tried really hard and you practiced you can do it—I think they pick up on that.

But Bill was less inclined towards pushing, suggesting of his three-year-old son was “not quite ready to be in organized sport. If I am going to pay the money for the equipment and do this, I am not going to have him just cry all the time. I want him to enjoy sports like I did as a kid.”

Parent and childcare providers' suggestions to optimize competence, confidence, and enjoyment were often in line with key pedagogical and psychological models, proposing play based-approaches, gradual progressions, optimal challenge, positive modeling, and age-appropriate adaptations (Bandura 1986; Bunker and Thorpe 1982; Côté and Hay 2002; Csikszentmihalyi 1975); however, our data provided little evidence of these approaches being followed. Most telling were the children's voices, offering brief but clear accounts of their low perceived sport competence and enjoyment. In turn, parents were often left questioning whether sport was indeed optimizing their child's development, and were unsure as to how to move forward positively from this early unexpected obstacle.

Being a Team Player

Parents also perceived their preschoolers' developed a sense of team through their sport experiences, suggesting children were learning elements of cooperative play such as “working as a team,” “learning how to help their team,” “what their own strengths and weaknesses are,” and “how to fit and behave with other players on the team.” But, as Hailey

outlined, her three-year-old daughter rarely seemed to be grasping these concepts:

When she plays soccer she has no concept of playing against the other team. You ask her what her favourite part is and she says, “Helping the other team.” She doesn’t understand the goal they are working towards. She just likes to run around and play with friends.

Children’s accounts echoed Hailey’s experiences, as they often explained the game as involving “stealing the ball from all the different kids” and “trying to get the ball away from everybody,” yet not liking it when “people steal the ball from me.” As for team identity, most were excited to share their team color (e.g., “I’m on green!”) but had little other concept of team cooperation (e.g., “Harry is my friend. He is on Red team” or “My favorite thing is playing with the other team.”). Some parents also believed their children learned about commitment from being a part of a team (as Charlotte explained, “You can’t just walk off the field, you have to be there for your team”); however, children again showed little evidence of grasping this concept, often eager to withdraw prior to the end of the season.

Findings regarding preschoolers’ (lack of) sense of team are not surprising given that advanced communication and organizational skills required for cooperative play are rarely seen during the preschool years (Parten 1932). While no research has examined the constructs of team in such young children, recent work among adolescents suggests that team cohesion involves commitment, unselfishness, communication, working together, understanding of other’s abilities, and social elements such as support, lack of conflicts, and engagement outside sport (Eys et al. 2009)—none of which were prevalent among our preschool study participants, raising questions once again about the relevance of organized sport in early childhood.

Considerations Moving Forward

In this chapter, we provided a more comprehensive understanding of preschooler sport, with particular focus on perceived objectives, outcomes, and potentially questionable practices. Our findings suggest

mixed support for the three objectives of children's sport (Côté and Fraser-Thomas 2011) among preschoolers. With regard to physical health, the structured environment, limited motivation and/or enjoyment of many children, and considerable amount of inactive time appeared to suggest that benefits may be less than through other forms of unstructured physical activity. While we expected motor skill development to be prominent in parents' motivations for enrolling their preschoolers in sport, particularly given increasing public awareness of Ericsson and colleagues' (1993) framework of deliberate practice, motor skills appeared to be of only minimal importance to most parents; however, organized sport was seen as a context for children to explore diverse activities and subsequently engage in lifelong sport and/or physical activity. The objective that received greatest attention surrounded psychosocial and life skill development. Yet again, perceptions of benefits often seemed much stronger than actual benefits. In sum, consistent with past submissions among older youth (Coakley and Donnelly 2009; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005), we suggest organized sport may have the potential to facilitate positive developmental outcomes for preschoolers; however, current programs appear fraught with limitations, creating considerable obstacles to preschoolers' positive development.

Given these limitations and difficulties, recent growth in (and mere existence of) preschooler sport programs in Western nations appears surprising. Why did the majority of parents in our study enroll their children in organized sport from the age of three, when the benefits are clearly questionable? Our findings suggest parents (and childcare providers alike) easily "bought into" the commonly held societal value of "sport as good"; they believed sport not only offered an ideal context for the development of psychosocial outcomes (i.e., life skills essential for future success), but also provided solutions to growing concerns around their child's health and physical activity, at a time of increasing societal anxiety surrounding these issues. These parental values and beliefs offer an ideal scenario for sport marketers to exploit parents, particularly through for-profit preschooler programs. This process could become cyclical, with increased preschooler participation re-emphasizing the perceived importance of providing young children with early organized sport experiences, often at the cost of parents spending quality time with their preschoolers, in unstructured free play.

Given the complexity and depth of these issues, we feel it is unlikely current trends in preschooler sport participation will quickly be reversed. As such, we conclude the chapter by considering suggestions of participants to optimize, the effectiveness and relevance of programs moving forward.

Programming Issues

Many participants spoke of sport programs' shortcomings as obstacles to optimal development, suggesting programmers should give greater consideration to preschoolers' stage of development through scheduling, structure, and organization of programs. Programs could be of shorter duration (i.e., 30–45 minutes versus one hour), comprised of fewer participants (i.e., 4–5 versus 12–15), and take place at a reasonable time of day (e.g., late afternoon rather than early evening), to avoid children being "overwhelmed" and "overtired." As one childcare provider emphasized: "To get a child's attention for a 40-minute baseball game or a 40-minute soccer game can be difficult, but to get them to go and play for 10 minutes in one activity is much more achievable" (Brian).

Coaching Issues

Consistent with the youth sport literature (e.g., Camiré et al. 2011, 2012; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005), coaches had tremendous potential to influence preschoolers' sport experiences and development, particularly as these children's first sport leaders. Unfortunately, coaching shortcomings were pervasive throughout the study, as coaches were unequivocally inexperienced, untrained, and unprepared: "I was only the coach because I signed up my son and they said, 'We need a coach, will you do it?' I didn't fully know one thing" (Charlene). Participants highlighted the importance of coach training focused on planning and management (e.g., short activities and smooth transitions to maintain children's attention and engagement), age appropriate practice design (e.g., open-ended motor skill development (LTAD 2015), deliberate play (Côté and Hay 2002)

versus deliberate practice (Ericsson et al. 1993)), effective communication for relationship-building with preschoolers, strategies to optimize children's psychosocial and life skill development, and measures to assure safety. Particularly pertinent was that coaches be in tune with children's stage of cognitive functioning, and modify rules, approaches, and communication accordingly, as there were multiple examples of children expressing negative emotions as a result of their misunderstanding of an activity; for example, in baseball, "sitting out" while waiting to bat, and, in soccer, hearing the whistle blow to change shifts, were both perceived by children as "time outs" (i.e., punishment).

Many participants also highlighted the challenges of parent-coaches in preschooler sport, namely, that for most children, this was their first experience having to "share" their parents, leading to complexities for all parties, including the team. As one parent-coach explained:

When I was coaching [my 4-year old], we had a couple things that didn't work. Like, she was mad I was paying attention to the group. And my husband was on the sidelines with my 2-year old who also wanted my attention, so he would be frustrated with me, because she would be mad, so I was always in trouble. It was not enjoyable for me whatsoever. I realized quickly that I could not coach my girls. It just doesn't work at that age, definitely not. (Siobhan)

While challenging in primarily volunteer-based sport systems, non-parent leaders may be essential among such young sport participants with strong emotional ties to parents, to assure programming can be delivered in a manner to effectively facilitate all participants' beneficial learning and development.

Guidelines and Policies

Finally, while many participants shared positive experiences within preschooler sport contexts, these were often contrasted with more negative experiences, frustrations, and challenges, raising important questions regarding preschoolers' readiness for organized sport and the relevance of

promoting/catering sport for this age group. As discussed above, current social norms in western nations appear grounded in assumed benefits of preschooler sport, which is likely linked in part to current growth in program availability and enrolment. Policies such as Canada's Children's Fitness Tax Credit, which offers tax credit for children's physical activity program fees beginning at birth, further reinforces messages of early sport benefits. Consequentially, parents for whom preschooler sport enrolment is not feasible (e.g., due to financial and/or practical resources), who ironically would benefit from the tax credit if they could afford to enroll their children, may be left believing they are inadequately facilitating their child's development. Unfortunately, evidence-based guidelines to help parents navigate key decisions regarding preschoolers' sport participation are few, with the most prominent policy document published nearly a quarter century ago (American Academy of Pediatrics 1992).

Moving forward, it is in programmers' best interest to prioritize guideline development to help parents determine when and how to introduce their children to organized sport, to in turn promote long-term sport and/or physical activity involvement. Evidently, much more research is required to thoroughly address key questions, including: What is the optimal balance of unstructured physical activity and organized sport among preschoolers? Should parents wait until children express an interest in organized sport before enrolling them? How much should parents "push" their child to engage once enrolled in sport? Are private, for-profit programs, such as Sportball, using the "active for life" and Sport for All agendas to exploit parents and children for financial gain? Until such questions are adequately addressed through empirical research, we believe public messaging should be enhanced to better reflect current knowledge surrounding both unstructured physical activity and organized sport collectively, that organized sport programs be held to a higher standard of program implementation to move closer to potential benefits, and that future research continue to systematically examine the role of organized sport in optimizing preschoolers' development.

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Notes

1. Similar models exist in other western nations, such as Australia's Foundations, Talent, Elite, and Mastery Model (Australian Institute of Sport 2015) and England's Participant Development Model (National Coaching Foundation 2009).
2. Sportball™ originated in Canada in 1995 and now has several hundred franchises across North America; it provides instruction for children of ages 16 months to 12 years in several popular sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball, ball hockey, tennis, volleyball, golf, and football.

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6

An Uneven Playing Field: Talent Identification Systems and the Perpetuation of Participation Biases in High Performance Sport

Nick Wattie and Joseph Baker

Introduction

The two predominant discourses on elite athlete development have described athletic talent as primarily the result of innate abilities (i.e., nature) *or* extensive practice and experience (i.e., nurture). Either discourse can be used to justify identifying precocious athletic abilities (i.e., talent identification) or beginning structured training/practice (i.e., talent development) at very young ages. However, greater emphases on talent identification and development early in childhood increase the possibility of suboptimal outcomes from both participation in sport generally, and talent identification and development in particular. In addition to the well-known consequences of over-pressurized environments for youth, such as lack of enjoyment, burnout and eventual dropout from sport (Fraser-Thomas et al. 2008; Goodger et al. 2007), biases within sports systems with respect to how talent is identified and developed can

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exert substantial influence on athlete development at early stages of skill development. First, athletes can be spuriously identified as talented or untalented; an example of type I (false positive) and type II errors (false negative). Second, if certain groups have an advantage over other groups at an early stage in life, the practices inherent to early talent identification and development (i.e., early training) can widen the gap between these groups in terms of skill development. Both of these limitations intrinsic to talent identification and development systems increase the risk of bias in high performance sport.

In this chapter, we describe a framework for understanding how biases in athlete development emerge between advantaged and disadvantaged youth. Specifically, we propose conceptualizing biases using the theory of Life Cycle Skill Formation (LCSF; Cunha and Heckman 2008; Cunha et al. 2006) and review three significant biases on athlete development: relative age, birthplace effects and socioeconomic status, all of which are specific to the developmental environment of high performance sport. We conclude with a discussion on the processes that perpetuate bias in high performance sport and suggest several directions for future research in this area.

Life Cycle Skill Formation: A Framework for the Uneven Playing Field

The framework of LCSF proposed by Nobel Laureate James Heckman and colleagues has been particularly useful for understanding differences in educational and health outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged youth (Cunha and Heckman 2008; Cunha et al. 2006). In particular, this body of research has observed that differences between advantaged and disadvantaged youth, in terms of cognitive (i.e., intelligence) and non-cognitive skills (e.g., motivation), can occur very early in childhood. Then, initial gaps in skills/abilities at young ages widen over time, partly because a person's current skill level makes it possible/easier to acquire later skills in an additive manner. For example, there is evidence that the inability to secure a loan for higher education restricts very few (approx. 8%) families from sending their adolescents to the

university (see Carneiro and Heckman 2003). Instead, individuals are primarily disadvantaged by their early developmental environments, which did not promote or invest in cognitive and non-cognitive skills, creating a deficit in their abilities at the end of secondary school education. Consequently, the research by Heckman and colleagues suggests that early interventions can improve cognitive, psychosocial and health outcomes (i.e., promote school attendance, reduce crime and teenage pregnancy and increase workforce productivity), and ultimately reduce the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. In addition, because skills (cognitive and non-cognitive) acquired at one period of development are necessary building blocks for skills learned later in development, the framework of LCSF proposes that investments in disadvantaged populations have the highest impact when they are made early in the lifespan (see Heckman 2006).

As a result of this research, Heckman and colleagues have identified a number of features important to life cycle skill formation (Cunha et al. 2006):

1. *Sensitive periods*: Some stages during the life cycle are more productive to skill formation.
2. *Self-productivity*: Skills produced at one stage of development facilitate attaining skills at later stages of development.
3. *Complementarity*: Skills produced at one stage of development increase the productivity of investments made at later stages of development. In addition, investments made early during development increase the productivity of (or ‘complementarity’ of) investments made at later stages of development.
4. *Multiplier effects*: Together, self-productivity and complementarity produce multiplier effects whereby current abilities beget later abilities. In addition, this suggests that equity-efficient trade-offs exist: investments made later in life produce lower returns without investments made early in life.

Emphases on talent identification and development practices in sport at young ages may create contexts where differences between advantaged and disadvantaged groups appear early in life. We propose that the gaps

between advantaged and disadvantaged groups are created and reinforced as a result of the LCSF features of *sensitive periods*, *self-productivity*, *complementarity*, and *multiplier effects* (Cunha et al. 2006). The following sections review three biases in athlete development between advantaged and disadvantaged youth: relative age, birthplace effects and socioeconomic status.

Relative Age

One of the most consistent and pervasive biases identified in sport is the ‘relative age effect’ (see Cobley et al. 2009), which refers to differences in chronological age (and as a result physical and cognitive maturation) between members of the same age cohort. In many youth sport systems worldwide, young athletes are grouped into age divisions using a selection, or cut-off date, to determine eligibility for participation. For example, with a selection date of December 31st, athletes must turn a particular age (e.g., 6 years old) by December 31st of the current season of play in order to be eligible to play in a specific division. Naturally, a child born immediately prior to the selection date deadline (i.e., the end of December) will be almost 12 months younger than a peer born earlier in that selection year (i.e., January). This difference in age between members of a cohort has been termed relative age and the consequences of those differences are known as relative age effects (RAEs: Cobley et al. 2009).

Ultimately, relatively older children have advantages over their relatively younger peers. For example, a 12-month relative age difference among 6-year-olds represents a 17% difference in accumulated lived experience, which may include informal experience playing games and sports (comparatively, a 12-month relative age difference among 16-year-olds only represents a 6% in total lived experience). Importantly, by virtue of the chronological differences in age between relatively older and younger youth, there are also probabilistic differences in growth and maturation.¹ Research suggests that youth selected to competitive sports teams are physically larger and more mature for their age. For example, a sample of 9–10-year-old competitive ice hockey players was found to

have mean values of height and weight at approximately the 75th percentile, compared to standard growth charts of children the same age (Baker et al. 2010).

Samples of youth athletes almost exclusively demonstrate RAEs (see Cobleby et al. 2009 for a review), strongly suggesting that these effects emerge because of advantages to relatively older youth who are more likely to be larger by virtue of their older chronological age. There is no evidence that relatively older youth are naturally better athletes; they are merely advantaged by favourable circumstance. In the case of RAEs, the favourable circumstance is the alignment between a *sensitive period* and early talent identification. The fact that RAEs emerge very early during childhood suggests that the *sensitive periods* for when these (dis)advantages influence athlete development are early in the lifespan. Evidence suggests that coaches preferentially select athletes who have a size and maturation advantage over their peers and/or that larger athletes have performance advantages over less physically developed peers (i.e., maturation-selection: Cobleby et al. 2009). Furthermore, RAEs continue to exist beyond the point where relative age is itself meaningful, which suggests that those selected early to competitive/high performance youth sport subsequently receive better coaching and more opportunities (Musch and Grondin 2001); these are all essentially investments that reinforce the process of self-productivity and complementarity, and help to perpetuate RAEs. Although athletes not selected to the highest performance streams might eventually ‘catch-up’ in terms of physical growth and maturation, the process of their skill formation has not benefited from the same rate of self-productivity and complementarity as those selected to youth sport because of early-life advantages. Furthermore, according to the theory of LCSF and the feature of complementarity, the investment/resources needed to address the problem may not be cost effective or realistic once athletes reach adolescence.

However, like many things, RAEs cannot be solely explained by a single variable (i.e., physical maturation), or decontextualized from important environmental constraints. Wattie and colleagues (Wattie et al. 2015) have suggested that in order to understand RAEs, the characteristics of the socio-cultural/physical environment, individual athletes’ characteristics and the demands of specific sports all need to be considered.

One of the examples described in Wattie and colleagues' review highlights this point nicely. In female gymnastics and artistic sports, reverse-RAEs have been observed, with over-representation of relatively *younger* athletes (Wattie et al. 2014; Hancock et al. 2015). This may be the result of a number of factors, including performance advantages to those with greater strength to weight ratios, dropout among relatively older (early maturing) participants and social norms. This example highlights that characteristics of the performer (i.e., sex), the characteristics of the sport (i.e., advantage to higher strength to size ratio), and environmental factors (i.e., social norms) are all important to understanding specific RAEs and the process of LCSF.

While the causes of RAEs may be context-specific, the breadth of this phenomenon is nevertheless impressive. RAEs have been identified in many sports (e.g., ice hockey, soccer, rugby, tennis, basketball) and in many countries around the world (for reviews of RAEs in sport see Coble et al. 2009; Musch and Grondin 2001; Wattie et al. 2015). Ultimately, however, what RAEs exemplify is that early maturational advantages (predominantly experienced by relatively older youth), coupled with emphases on talent identification and development at early life stages, create sensitive periods during which early gaps in skill development appear, and can become reinforced across the lifespan.

Birthplace

Over the past decade, the size of an athlete's birthplace has emerged as a predictor of becoming an elite athlete. This effect has been strongly supported in North American and Australian samples and highlights the inadequacies of athlete identification and development systems that assume all geographic areas are similar. In one of the first studies to explicitly explore this effect in elite sport (although see Carlson 1988; Curtis and Birch 1987; Rooney 1969), Côté et al. (2006) examined geographical distributions of professional athletes compared to the general population. They noted that athletes coming from large urban areas (> 500,000 inhabitants) or small rural communities (< 1000 inhabitants) were significantly under-represented at the professional level. For

instance, approximately 1% of the US population live in towns with between 50,000 and 99,999 residents, but 10–17% of professional hockey, basketball, baseball and football athletes come from towns of this size (Côté et al. 2006; MacDonald et al. 2009). This general effect, that very large and very small centres may disadvantage some athletes, has since been replicated in samples ranging from players drafted to play in the National Hockey League to participants at the Olympic Games (see MacDonald and Baker 2013 for a full review). However, there is some evidence that the effect may not be generalizable to all contexts, as evidenced by variable trends among European athletes (Baker et al. 2009). As such there is a need to study the generalizability of this effect and its possible mechanisms.

Similar to RAEs, it is highly unlikely that children from very large and very small centres are naturally poorer athletes than those from medium-sized regions. And while the mechanisms underpinning these effects are largely unknown, it is likely that during sensitive periods (early childhood) the socio-cultural and physical environmental characteristics of medium-sized regions represent a form of early life investment in athlete development. MacDonald and Baker (2013), in their review of birth-place effects, reviewed possible mechanisms such as the ‘big-fish-little-pond effect’ proposed by Marsh and his colleagues to explain the development of self-concept (see Marsh et al. 2008)—a variable that may be significant in understanding long-term skill acquisition and athlete development. Marsh’s work suggests that the environments of athletes from small to medium size centres may be optimal for the development of positive self-concept, which is associated with skill development and performance (see Marsh and Perry 2005). In addition, Bale (2003) has suggested that the cultural identity of smaller cities can be very explicitly tied to sport, which may socialize youth towards participation and enjoyment of participation. Both of these hypothesized mechanisms are congruent with the general notion that early investments in non-cognitive skills (i.e., self-concept, motivation, enjoyment, and beliefs resulting from socialization) are important to the overall process of skill formation.

It is also possible that environmental characteristics provide an early life advantage to those that live in medium-sized regions. Curtis and

Birch (1987) suggested that medium-sized cities might be large enough to have physical resources (i.e., sport facilities), but not so many people that the demand for those physical resources outweighs the availability. As such, youth in medium-sized regions may have more opportunity (and encouragement) to practise, compete and develop their abilities. On the other hand, athletes from geographic regions outside this optimal range may have more limited competition to play against, in the case of athletes from small rural areas, or too much competition, in the case of athletes from large urban centres.

As a result of *complementarity*, these early life investments in a variety of different skills important for athlete development may ultimately increase the impact of investments in athlete development at later stages of development—even once athletes are no longer physically located in their ‘birthplace’. Hence why the birthplace place effect can be observed at elite adult levels sport (e.g., professional hockey: Côté et al. 2006), well after players have left their favourable developmental environments.

While these explanations are reasonable, they alone cannot explain the different findings between North American and European nations, especially given the international stability of the ‘big fish little pond’ effect (Marsh and Hau 2003). Therefore, other cultural and/or social variables undoubtedly contribute to the effect. In their study of birthplace effects in Olympic samples from Germany, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, Baker and colleagues (Baker et al. 2009) considered whether population density, which differs considerably between North American and European nations, might help to explain differences between countries. Their results, while inconclusive, emphasize the need to consider specific constraints related to the geographic regions under examination. While work in this area continues, existing evidence suggests opportunities for athlete development differ considerably between regions.

Socioeconomic Status

There is also evidence that access to financial resources and socioeconomic status (SES) limit an individual’s likelihood of becoming a high

performance athlete. Income is significantly related to sport participation in the general population. For example, the General Social Survey explored the net (before tax) household income of Canadians and found that 58% of Canadian children from households that earn less than \$40,000 (before tax) participate in sport, while this rises to 85% for children from households that earn over \$80,000 (before tax) (Canadian Heritage 2013). To put this in perspective, in 2012, the median income of 25,797,510 taxable Canadians was \$31,320/year (Statistics Canada 2014). Overall, 54.5% of Canadians earned less than \$35,000/year, and 70.6% earned less than \$50,000/year. If we consider the dramatically greater likelihood of sport participation among children from households earning \$80,000/year (Canadian Heritage 2013), it is striking that approximately only 14% of Canadians have an annual income greater than or equal to \$75,000 (Statistics Canada 2014).

While the relationship between SES and sport participation in the general population has been well documented, these aggregate data do not provide information about biases related to high performance sport. To date, there has been little research that has considered whether the relationship between SES and Canadian high performance sport is consistent with the trends observed in the general population. The notable exception is a study by Beamish (1990), which explored Canadian national team athletes and athletes funded by the federal government in 1986 and 1987. He observed that 44% of Canadian high performance came from families with incomes in the top 20% of Canadian incomes, while only 10% of athletes came from the bottom 20% of Canadian earners. Similarly, there was a significant overrepresentation of Canadian high performance athletes whose fathers were at the highest range of scores on an index of occupational prestige/achievement (i.e., the Blishen index of the male labour force; an index comprised of occupation, income, education and a prestige score). Therefore, the available evidence suggests that the relationship between SES and athlete development in Canadian high performance sport mirrors the relationship between SES and sport participation in the general population. Indeed, SES appears to be a predictor of sport participation across life stages, beginning at the earliest stages of

participation. While informative, the stability of the SES-athlete development effect in contemporary samples of Canadian high performance athletes is unknown. However, the available evidence suggests that higher SES eliminates the financial barriers to participation and provides children with the greater opportunity to participate in activities that allow them to develop their athletic abilities. In addition, research from countries such as the United Kingdom also suggests that high performance athletes are more likely to emerge from affluent households while lower SES youth are under-represented (see Collins and Buller 2003). High SES parents have the means to make greater investments in their child's formation of athletic abilities at early ages through enrollment in activities (or multiple activities), and at later ages through access to specialized coaches and purchase of equipment.

Going forward, it may also be important to explore whether there are sensitive periods of development when financial resources are particularly influential on the overall process of athlete development. For example, White and McTeer (2012) summarized a number of different ways² that SES might influence sport participation. It may be that SES is a constant influence on sport participation, with no particular sensitive periods. Alternatively, financial barriers may only be particularly important during early childhood and these barriers decrease as youth progress from childhood to adolescence, or vice versa (i.e., financial barriers may not be impactful during early childhood, but do become salient during adolescence). White and McTeer's (2012) analysis suggests that the main barriers to participation imposed by SES constraints are during childhood (not adolescence). The authors suggest that opportunities to participate in sport at young ages can socialize children to value active living, and that this may partially explain the SES-sport participation trends observed subsequent to childhood among adults. However, it is important to note that this research did not distinguish between different levels of sport (i.e., recreational vs high performance sport). As such, while socialization to active living and other psychosocial outcomes (enjoyment and intrinsic motivation) may be important products of early sport participation facilitated by SES, it is possible that financial resources are important

throughout athlete development (i.e., the persistent model), as the cost of increasingly specialized training, coaching and equipment increases with the level of competition/participation.

In addition, it will also be important to consider how SES is categorized. For example, the highest SES (family income) category within the study by White and McTeer (2012) was '\$40,000 or more'. The authors themselves acknowledge that this categorization may have been too broad to capture important variability between different income levels, something that may be particularly salient to high performance sport participation, which has extraordinary costs (see Campbell and Parcels 2013).

Understanding how SES impacts athlete development, particularly in contexts where talent development and identification begin early in life, will be increasingly important: Income inequality in Canada has been increasing since the 1990s (Conference Board of Canada 2011), which may have significant implications for athlete development and the perpetuation of biases within high performance sport.

Moving Forward

Biases such as relative age, birthplace and SES illustrate the inherent complexity of athlete development in high performance sport and emphasize the influence system-specific constraints can have on developmental outcomes. While factors such as genetics and extensive training are clearly necessary for athletic success, biases such as the ones outlined in this chapter can limit the extent to which primary factors can be manifested and facilitated (see Baker and Horton 2004). These biases also demonstrate that the notion of sport as a meritocracy (i.e., that progress is the sole result of ability and merit) is clearly a fallacy, since athlete development is at least partially the result of being advantaged by factors such as policy, developmental environment and/or wealth.

There are many questions about the mechanisms of participation biases on athlete development that remain unanswered. However, the LCSF framework provides a single framework with features and language

to explicitly acknowledge how biases are created and perpetuated throughout athlete development stages. In addition, it allows for the possibility of quantifying the cost effectiveness of interventions in disadvantaged groups at different life stages. For example, in future relative age interventions it could be possible to quantify the return on, or cost effectiveness of, investments made later in adolescents versus earlier in life with respect to eliminating RAEs. However, there are some important differences between previous use of the LCSF framework and its use in the context of athlete development. While there is substantial support for LCSF as it relates to the formation of cognitive (e.g., IQ) and non-cognitive skills (e.g., motivation, socio-emotional intelligence etc.), and how these skills influence a number of educational and health outcomes, there are some notable differences between those contexts and those of sport. While the cognitive and non-cognitive skills described by previous work are undoubtedly important to athlete development, going forward, it will be necessary to consider how an athlete's physical characteristics (i.e., size) should be considered within this framework of skill formation. It may also be necessary to add *physical skills* (or attributes) to the existing cognitive and non-cognitive skills described by previous research.

It may also be important to study whether advantages associated with relative age, birthplace and SES create gaps in skill formation prior to the onset of organized sport participation, or whether gaps in skill formation only begin after the onset of participation. For example, there is some evidence that relatively older youth (or their parents) are more likely to self-select informal sport participation prior to any stage of participation where coaches select participants for teams (Delorme and Raspaud 2009; Hancock et al. 2013). Future research will need to establish a comprehensive understanding of when and how biases influence skill formation. Such information will be essential for calculating what kind of investments are needed to reduce or eliminate biases, what stages of development would be best to target for interventions and whether or not some of biases (e.g., relative age vs. SES) could be addressed more easily/cost-effectively than others.

Currently, we do not have the answers to these questions. This is problematic, since at its very core, not understanding the influence of such biases is a failure to understand *who* our athletes are, *where* our

athletes come from and *how* our athletes develop. Without this information it is very difficult to design equitable and efficient athlete development initiatives and to direct resources for maximum return and cost efficiency.

The biases summarized in this chapter highlight that Sport for All is unrealized in high performance sport. At some level high performance sport cannot be 'for all'. For example, high performance sport inherently involves increasing exclusionary practices at each stage of competition and the task constraints inherent to specific sports can exclude large segments of the population based on physical characteristics (e.g., height). However, the biases discussed in this chapter reflect social inequalities (i.e., relative age and SES) and fortuitous developmental environments that constrain equal opportunities for sport for all independent of the selectivity of high performance sport. Moreover, at least two of these biases (i.e., relative age and SES) have been shown to influence both recreational and high performance sport participation suggesting that understanding may create more equal opportunities within sport at multiple levels of participation. Going forward, it will be necessary to consider whether the investments needed to promote LCSF necessary for recreational participants differ from the investments needed to promote LCSF for high performance sport. While Sport for All remains a laudable goal, systematic change and a better understanding of the skill formation process may be required to ensure participation in sport is within the grasp of those interested in its pursuit.

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Notes

1. Although not directly measured or studied, researchers have speculated about the possible importance of relative age-related differences in cognitive maturation on athlete development (see Helsen et al. 2016).
2. Originally put forward by Chen et al. (2002) to describe the relationship between SES and children's health.

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7

Girls' Presentations of Self in Physical Culture: A Consideration of Why Sport is Not Always the Answer

Eimear Enright

Introduction

How young people engage in meaning making around their bodies and sport impacts on how they feel about their bodies and sport, and on their propensity to lead physically active lives (Azzarito and Sterling 2010; Azzarito and Harrison 2008; Oliver and Lalik 2001, 2004a). School is neither the only nor the principal space in and through which young people construct meanings about their physicalities. Health and physical education pedagogical activity is not solely the preserve of schools and health and/or physical education teachers. Nearly two decades ago, Kirk (1999: 71) advocated 'recasting the notion of young people's participation in physical activity as engagement of young people with physical culture'—physical culture being the myriad of meanings, values and social practices concerned with the maintenance, representation and regulation of the body both within and beyond schools. Similarly, Tinning

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(2008) has argued for a conceptualization of sports pedagogy, which recognizes the importance of non-formal sites of learning where young people learn about sport, the body and health, and a 2010 monograph for *Sport Education and Society* dealt exclusively with body pedagogies, meaning all pedagogical actions oriented towards defining and shaping particular types of bodies (Rich and Evans 2010). These pedagogical actions, it was noted, included families, churches, peers and sites of popular and consumer culture. Common across these approaches to understanding how young people construct their physicalities is an acknowledgement of the important role played by social interaction in shaping young people's (in)active identities and how they think and feel about their bodies, sport and physical activity.

Girls and Sport in Context

While in much of the earlier research around girls' disengagement from sport and physical activity, girls were constructed as the problem, in recent years, there is increasing appreciation that the problem might not actually be the girls, but rather the pedagogical and curricular contexts in which we are expecting girls to engage (Enright and O'Sullivan 2010; Flintoff and Scraton 2006). Feminist activist scholars, in particular, have been central in illustrating how producing knowledge in collaboration with girls can support them in transforming oppressive practices within their local physical education and physical activity contexts (Oliver and Lalik 2001, 2004; Oliver et al. 2009; Fisette 2011; Enright and O'Sullivan 2012b, 2013). These transformative pedagogical efforts have been grounded in the lives of students; participatory; activist; culturally sensitive; academically rigorous; hopeful and critical (Enright and McCuaig 2016). Amongst other things, this work highlights the importance of understanding the subtleties of context in any critical or transformative pedagogical project with girls. Building on this transformative and critical work, as well as calls from Kirk (1999), Tinning (2008), Rich and Evans (2010) and others to open up how we think about pedagogy, this chapter considers the nature and complexity of the lives of five teenage girls, and their relationships with sport, physical activity and their bodies.

The Presentation of Self in Physical Culture

In what follows, I recruit Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework to think about how the social identities and physicalities of five Irish teenage girls are constituted in and through the micro-practices their bodies perform in everyday spaces, and to consider how and why these girls have come to (de)value sport and physical activity. Goffman's enduring contribution to social analysis lies in uncovering the everyday routines of social encounters and how that impacts on personal identity (Smith 2006). In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) proposed a dramaturgical metaphor, comprising of the concepts performance, regions (front and back), setting, impression management and teams. This metaphor offers a framework and a vocabulary, which many have found helpful in uncovering the micro-world of social interaction (Scheff 2006). According to Goffman (1959), individuals are constantly involved in the *performance* of their identity and in interpreting the performance of others. Identity, therefore, is not just 'being', but 'doing' and 'to be a given kind of person ... is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto' (Goffman 1959: 81). Goffman's notion of performance, while clearly cognizant of the role of dominant discourses in shaping identity, does allow scope for negotiation and agency in various settings.

Goffman (1959: 22) has asserted that 'a setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place.' It can be argued, however, that the body does not just move between settings, it is not just a *personal front* (items or equipment needed in order to perform), the body is a setting. Social geographers support the idea of the body as space and the following argument crafted by Valentine (2001: 15) justifies this perspective:

[the body] marks a boundary between self and other, both in a literal physiological sense but also in a social sense. It is a personal space. A sensuous organ, the site of pleasure and pain around which social definition of well-being, illness, happiness and health are constructed, it is our means for

connecting with, and experiencing, other spaces. It is the primary location where our personal identities are constituted and social knowledges and meanings inscribed.

The body, therefore, is both a material and a social surface upon which and through which different social categories and social distinctions are inscribed (Skeggs 2004).

Methodology

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) project from which this chapter draws was conducted within and beyond the walls of an inner-city Irish post-primary school that has been designated ‘disadvantaged’. The purpose of the PAR project was to work with disengaged students to understand and transform their self-identified barriers to their physical education engagement and physical activity participation. While 41 teenage girls were involved to varying degrees with the PAR process, this chapter draws on the photographs and written and verbal narratives generated in the first year of the study by five of the student participants. These five students, while not selected as representative, did demonstrate quite different social positions within the class and included the most (Debra and Kelly) and the least (Grace) vocal and the most (Debra) and the least active (Grace). Participant’s self-selected pseudonyms are used here to identify their contributions. The students’ physical education teacher, Roisin (also a pseudonym), and I were also participants in this process, occupying the role of adult allies, fostering the students’ capacities to name, critique and transform that which was dysfunctional in their physical education and physical activity experiences.

Consistent with the overarching frame (PAR) of our larger study and our appreciation of the value of visual methodologies, we selected photovoice as one method which would help us to begin the PAR process, facilitate dialogue with and between our participants, and support participants in naming the inequities around, and barriers to, their physical education engagement and physical activity participation. Photovoice has been described as ‘a powerful participatory action research method

where individuals are given the opportunity to take photographs, discuss them collectively, and use them to create opportunities for personal and/or community change' (Linnan et al. 2001: para 1). Participants were asked to make photographs of their lives and given prompts to focus some of their image making. These prompts included where I spend my leisure time; my physically active life; physical activity facilities nearby; physical activity in the lives of my family and friends; and the things that are important to me.

The participants kept one copy of their photographs and I retained the second copy. The participants' photographs were discussed in individual and group contexts where the students and adult allies together engaged in dialogue regarding what these participatory research artefacts represented. These conversations were audio recorded and later transcribed. Some of the participants spoke to their photographs through written narratives. The photographs were, therefore, used as an aid to conversation (Moss et al. 2007) and participants were always involved in helping us to understand the meanings associated with their chosen images (Pink 2003). I have written elsewhere in more detail about the methodological decision-making associated with this project and specifically the girls' engagement with data analysis (Enright and O'Sullivan 2012a, b). I will now introduce you to the five characters whose stories form the backbone of this chapter.

The Cast

Kelly

Kelly is 16 and the youngest of 12 children. She has eight sisters and three brothers, all of whom she sees often. Kelly's mother is a settled Traveller although Kelly says her Mam and Dad 'still do a good bit of travelling like, they'd go away a lot visiting people, you know'. Kelly lives in a flat with her Mam, her Dad, her 18 year old sister Shelly and Shelly's baby Lily. When Kelly was younger '[she] went away in the caravan with [her] cousins in the summer but not anymore since some of [her] cousins were locked up for stuff'. As most of her brothers and sisters have babies

of their own, she says she is 'well sick of babysitting at this stage', and sometimes she feels like babysitting is all she does, other than hanging around the flats or the estate. Kelly writes of herself: 'I am the least patient person I know. I get angry when other people are slow or annoying me and I've a very bad temper and roar a lot'. Kelly says her 'friends think [she's] good fun, happy, hyper and a good friend who would stick up for them'.

Jade

Jade is 16 years old and the oldest in her family. She has three brothers and a sister of which she writes 'means there's a lot of babysitting'. She lives with her Mam, Dad, brothers and sister in a flat across the road from Kelly. Jade's Mam and Dad have been together for nearly 20 years but 'didn't get a chance to get married until this year, and they've planned the wedding for September and [she's] more excited about the wedding than anything ever in [her] life'. Jade loves watching TV especially 'Home and Away ... and [she loves] every kind of music, jazz, hip hop, R&B.' She describes herself as 'easy going, funny, always happy, a good listener and caring'.

Debra

Debra is 16 and lives with her Dad and two brothers, one of whom is her twin and the other who is 30 years old and severely disabled. She also has three sisters and two brothers who have their own 'places'. She says she is 'the real baby' of the house because her twin is five minutes older than her and she is the only girl left at home. Debra's Mam left when she was seven and Debra does not talk to her now. Debra's free time is spent either babysitting for one of her sisters or with her boyfriend Trevor. She says herself and Trevor are 'like chewing gum, stuck together'. She 'absolutely love's ... talking to [her] friends' and dislikes being 'stuck at home doing nothing'. She likes 'listening to sad songs like by Celine Dion, Garth Brooks and Kenny Rogers', but also likes dance music. She describes herself as 'kind, caring, energetic, fun and loving'.

Grace

Grace is 16 years old and an only child. She lives with her mother who works as a cleaner. She does not see her Dad very often. Grace spends most of her time after school with her boyfriend, who is '20 and has his own job and his own place'. Grace loves playboy bunny merchandise and spends '[her] money on playboy jewelry and tops and all'. When Grace was asked to describe herself she wrote, 'I don't hang with mad people who call me names. I don't watch television and I don't read. I like music like dance music and I love babies and cleaning. Cleaning is like a hobby for me. I think that I'm quiet, sound, nice, caring and kind'.

Shelly

Shelly is 16 and the oldest in her family. She describes her family as her mother, and her three sisters. Shelly's favourite thing in the world is music. She loves 'all chart music, like Rihanna and Faith Evans'. She also likes to read true stories in the magazines like 'Take a Break, Chat and Hello'. Shelly has just begun 'seeing [her] first boyfriend'. Now she says she 'sees him the whole time, don't do anything else really just hang around with him'. Shelly thinks her friends would describe her as 'a mad laugh, funny, a good personality and kind'. Shelly describes herself as 'mad, kind, loving, careable and have a heart of gold'. Shelly and Grace are first cousins.

Settings

The analysis of these five girls' narratives and photographs revealed four settings (body, school, community, and home) as significant sites in the construction of their (in)active physicalities. Each of these settings represents the intersection of a range of connections, interconnections, interrelations and movements of the girls, who have similar and different ways of acting within them. Visual methodologies facilitated access to the girls' front stage and back stage behaviours and (re)articulated identities within and between these spaces (Goffman 1959) and offered insight into how they constructed their physicalities.

The Body

The girls in this study were acutely aware that their bodies were constantly on show, and constantly 'performing' beauty. A number of images the girls took depicted jewellery and body modifications, including tattoos and multiple piercings. Goffman (1959: 24) uses the term appearance to refer to 'those stimuli, which function at a time to tell us of the performers' social statuses'. For many of the girls in this study, jewellery was used to give expression to their idealized identities. Curry (1993) has argued that 'body decoration lies at the interface between the private and the public. The skin is the actual membrane between what, on one side, is inside me and, on the other side, is outside me. It is superficially me and at the same time a surface onto which I can project that which is more deeply me' (Curry 1993: 69). Debra's body piercing (Fig. 7.1) represented one way in which she modified her body:

Got it done a while ago but this is a new jewel like. Boys think it's hot but it was real sore getting it done ... I said I'd take this photo cause my body is important to me, keeping a flat tummy like and making it look good is important to me and the jewel is 'different to the normal ones'. I like myself in this photo ... but I wouldn't show it to everyone. (Debra)



Fig. 7.1 The things that are important to me (Debra)

Debra's piercing and choice of 'jewel' was clearly one way of articulating a self-identity. It was also one way of taking some control of her body. In a later conversation when talking about her piercing she revealed, 'my dad didn't want me to get it done but it's my body'. Also quite evident in Debra's narrative is the notion of the body as a porous site/location, subject to control and regulation by others. Debra cares about others' perception of her body. She cares about presenting her body in culturally desirable ways and for her the aesthetic makes the pain experienced while acquiring the piercing worth it. She is also quite clearly aware, however, that her piercing may not be well received by all audiences, in which case she has the option to keep it hidden. For Kelly, this ability to choose to display or conceal what she called her 'tramp stamp' (tattoo on lower back) was exciting: 'Not everyone knows I have it and so it's my dirty, exciting secret, like my parents don't know yet only my sister all the girls have seen it and think it's hot'. Social pressures led the girls to present certain images of self while concealing others, switching back and forth between different roles, depending on the audience.

There were also aspects of the girls' personal front that they constantly worked very hard to maintain, almost irrespective of audience. Piecing together snippets from conversations with Kelly about a photograph of the things that were important to her gives some indication of her investment in her daily performances:

I'm one of the tallest girls in my class and I have long blond hair, well it's dyed like but its blonde anyway. I have to spend about 15 or 20 minutes putting on my make up in the morning, every morning. I got gel nails done the other day, cost €12 but I think they're worth it. I wear mock tan most of the time. You can get the tan wipes for €2 in Penney's I love my jewellery: hoops, chains, rings and all and they're all gold. I'd feel naked without them ... I'm not ready for the world until I'm flawless. (Kelly)

When asked if there was anyone who she'd feel comfortable around if she hadn't undergone her usual morning routine, Kelly conceded that 'the only people who I wouldn't care about seeing me would be my family, otherwise no matter what I'm doing I need to be done up'. Engaging in

sport or physical activity compromised Kelly's ability to maintain her 'flawless' appearance and this, she explained, played a part in her rejection of sport, physical activity and physical education.

The School

In identifying school in this case as a setting, we mean the informal world of the young people themselves: of social networks and peer group cultures that exist within school boundaries, before, during and after classes. Quite a number of the photos taken in response to 'my physically active life' were of girls in uniforms sitting on a bench in the school sports hall. The conversations stimulated by these photographs convincingly illustrate the role of the team in maintaining certain performances. During the group discussion of these particular photographs, the girls' shared definition of physical education was repeatedly voiced:

Us walking to school with our brollies ... raining as usual. This is our physically active lives, not just in school but this is all we do for exercise. We don't do PE or basketball because it's stupid and we're too lazy. (Shelly)

Physical education was consistently defined as stupid during early group discussions. Interestingly, however, in an individual conversation with Shelly she expresses some feelings and thoughts that might have ruined the front stage performance had she shared them in the group context.

I don't know what happened I just didn't bring in my gear, because no one else really was, so why be bothered and get hassled, and then it's like you don't even think about it anymore ... it's easier to just fit in with the crowd ... I don't think anything bad happened or I suddenly didn't like sport or fitness, it was just easier not to do PE. (Shelly)

Shelly clearly articulates that while these behaviours had begun as facades or fronts in an effort to fit into the 'team', with time, this front had become second nature to the girls. They became, in a sense, 'hostage' to the opinions of others (Friedman 1997: 33).

One popular reason cited for non-participation was the effect activity had in terms of ruining the girls' appearances and making them 'sticky and stinky' (Jade). One of the 'most annoying things about PE' for Kelly was that it undid much of the effort she had invested in doing her make-up that morning: 'It wrecks my face, like the make-up goes and I'm big red spot head'. Kelly admitted that her beauty regime is 'mostly for the fellas, they like girls looking good'. When I suggested to Shelly that there were no boys in her physical education class or in the school and perhaps she didn't need to worry about her make-up on physical education days, I was corrected:

Listen miss, there might be no boys here but there's boys on the way here and boys on the way home, especially like well have you seen the gang of fellas outside the gate after school, and you telling me it don't matter, right. (Shelly)

Significantly, while the possibility of being seen by boys while entering or leaving the school building were important considerations for both Debra and Kelly, the two most body-confident girls in the group, Jade identified other girls in school as the audience in whose company she felt under most pressure to 'look well':

This is [Mary]. Of course she didn't care about getting her photo taken, she's stunning and her teeth are gorgeous, look at them and she always gets her hair dyed in Classycuts costs a bomb there This is an all girls school like and its crazy what goes on It's like one big beauty competition against each other of course I want to look well, I don't want them looking down their nose at me. (Jade)

While she cares a great deal about how she is perceived by the other girls in her school, she also suggests that she doesn't invest excessively in impressing them:

This is just another one of me with my friends because they're important to me Yeah, course I care about what they think but I'm not bending over backwards trying to impress them all the time, wouldn't do that for anyone. (Jade)

It wasn't just their physical appearance that mattered in terms of the girls' performances. Some were equally concerned that their bags, school folders and phones were 'this season' (Kelly). Grace, speaking to one of the photos she took, articulates why having 'nice stuff' is important to her: 'I like having nice stuff. Nice folders and glitter pens. I like looking clean and organized in school and I like when people notice' (Grace).

Two significant audiences emerged, therefore, from these school data. In school, both the 'male gaze' and the gaze of their female peers were seen to play crucial roles in upholding the integrity of the team performance and contributing to how the girls constructed their physicality within school.

The Community

In line with Johnston et al. (2000), we understand community to be the social network of interacting individuals, which is usually concentrated within a defined geographical area. A number of the prompts the students responded to through the photovoice task inspired them to make images in/of their communities. The discussion of these photographs revealed some recurring themes relating to how and by whom public spaces come to be defined. All of the girls perceived that there were more opportunities in their locality for boys to be active, than for girls. The photovoice task seemed to confirm this perception, as many of the girls commented on how much easier it was to get photographs of boys being physically active:

That's [Mary's] brother kicking ball in the alley on the island. I'm the same as Jade, all boys doing the sport in the photos. There just weren't no girls doing anything outside.

Jade was particularly aware of differential access to physical activity. The following exchange highlights one of the many physical activity facilities she identified in her local community, which she felt she could not access. This excerpt clearly highlights the power of visual media in promoting and reinforcing dominant gender stereotyped discourses of gyms (and most community recreational areas) as male spaces.

Eimear—Is that the gym that [Kelly] is doing research on?

Jade—No, that's by [Mike's shop].

Eimear—Did you ever go to this gym?

Jade—No, course not, it's only for men

Eimear—So no girls are allowed.

Jade—Yeah

Eimear—How did you know it was only for men?

Jade—It was on the window, on the other side, not in the photo like but there are only pictures of men on it.

Shelly, when talking about a photograph of a gym she had taken explains, 'I thought my thighs were very fat, I thought [the gym] would help me'. In a later conversation, Shelly shared that what she thought going to the gym would 'help' her to do was to lose weight and therefore get a boyfriend. This rationale, juxtaposed with that provided for why she stopped swimming, clearly reveals the tensions she experienced in negotiating a physically active life in the community. Again, in discussing a photograph she has taken of a swimming pool near where she lives, she cites an awareness of 'the male gaze' as one of the primary factors influencing her decision to stop swimming. 'Well I used to like it but then ... who'd be there and see you, what feens [boys] you know ...' (Shelly). The 'male gaze' or audience is, therefore, at once motivating and prohibiting her from engaging in physical activity in community physical activity contexts.

Home

Shelly, Kelly and Grace were three of the many girls who took photographs of their bathrooms and bedrooms in response to the prompt, 'where I spend my leisure time'. Yet, even in the seclusion provided by their bathrooms (Fig. 7.2) and bedrooms their loyalty to their idealized role continues.

My bathroom ... Spend a lot of time doing my make up in the morning in here and me Mam and me sisters especially would be fit to kill me.
(Shelly)



Fig. 7.2 Where I spend my leisure time (Shelly)

The girls' bedrooms and bathrooms were the settings where they invested in the aesthetic that they would later present to others. This was a time-intensive process for many and one which was sometimes threatened by local influences, for example, another family member wishing to use the bathroom. These girls were pursuing what Bordo (1993: 166) has described as the 'ever-changing, homogenizing, elusive ideal of femininity'. She suggests:

Through the exacting and normalizing disciplines of diet, make-up and dress-central organizing principles of time and space in the day of many women—we are rendered less socially orientated and more centripetally focused on self-modification. Through these disciplines, we continue to memorise on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, of insufficiency, of never being good enough.

Engaging in physical activity and, in particular, the resulting effect on the girls' make-up was inconsistent with the girls' narrow idealized feminine standards. This did not always prevent participation as a number of the girls, who clearly found some forms of physical activity satisfying, did

sometimes surreptitiously participate. When this did happen, their participation tended to be concealed and in what Azzarito and Sterling (2010) have termed 'shielded spaces'. Grace, when discussing an image she had taken of her playing soccer illustrates this point:

This is me with the cousins. I'd throw on a pair of shorts when I'm babysitting and go for a kick around out the back with my little cousins but I wouldn't be caught dead doing that on the green out the front in broad daylight. (Grace)

Goffman (1959: 42) has referred to this sort of behaviour as 'secret consumption'. This 'secret consumption' or 'shielding' of physical activity participation was also evident in how Shelly talked about some of the photographs she had taken in her single sex physical education class:

Me bouncing a basketball in PE have never played basketball anywhere else in my life. Wouldn't I look stupid bouncing a ball out in [Greenfield]. The lads would have a right laugh (Shelly).

The home was not a bounded space shaped only by the family members who lived there, but it was, like the school, the community and the body, 'a porous space shaped also by the interconnections with the immediate locality and with the wider world' (Holloway and Valentine 2000: 775). Four of the five girls' bedrooms were pink, with Playboy bunnies and princesses being the two most common pieces of sign equipment on show. This finding is consistent with the larger data set. Duvets, curtains, cushions, mirrors, mats, lampshades, folders and towels were just some of the items on which either the Playboy bunny logo or a princess graphic of some sort were printed.

Discussion

Existing research has illustrated the nature and complexity of young people's (ethnic/gendered/classed) experiences of inclusion and exclusion in socially constructed spaces, including physical activity and leisure spaces

(Azzarito and Solmon 2005; Carrington et al. 1987; Oliver et al. 2009; Scraton 1992). We know it is difficult for many girls (and indeed some boys) to pursue leisure opportunities in public, gender-mixed spaces (Enright and O'Sullivan 2010; Green and Singleton 2006). We have also learned that physical activity participation within the school is not necessarily indicative of out-of-school activity levels (Flintoff and Scraton 2001; Evans 2006). It is clearly necessary, therefore, to view bodies as 'relational things', the products of interactions (Valentine 2001), rather than as 'individual projects' (Shilling 1993). Evans (2006) argues that it is important to 'view bodies in relation to wider geographical scales', such as the home, school, street and global scale (Evans 2006: 550). Photovoice allowed us access to all of these scales and facilitated us in gaining insight into the girls' everyday encounters and routines in a way that we may have had to struggle by using other methods. It helped us to see more clearly the ways in which different settings and audiences shape how young people construct their physicalities in public and private spaces. Goffman (1959: 121) writes:

If the activity of an individual is to embody several ideal standards, and if a good showing is to be made, it is likely then that some of these standards will be maintained in public by the private sacrifice of others. Often, of course, the performer will sacrifice those standards whose loss can be concealed and will make this sacrifice in order to maintain standards whose inadequate application cannot be concealed.

Sport did not constitute an ideal standard in these girls' lives. It was not a conscious or a real sacrifice, because it was not something that was precious or highly valued by the girls. Beauty emerged as the most important standard, or the performance the girls were most invested in, and ironically, sport was perceived as beauty's antagonist. For reasons previously explained, sport and physical activity were seen to compromise the girls' idealized notions of themselves and each other.

The photographs captured aspects of the girls' backstage performances, which may have been difficult to access using, for example, interviews or surveys alone. What we learned through the use of photovoice was how difficult it is to be a teenage girl in a culture where youth choices and decisions in all settings are increasingly influenced by global and local

influences. Physical activity was not a shared value among the group of girls in this study nor did their interpretation of their social spaces reflect an acceptance of girls as physical activity performers. There was a very small audience who the girls were willing to allow view their active performances and/or make-up free selves. This audience comprised their immediate family (and peers in certain settings). The home while perceived as 'safer' than other settings was still very connected to somewhat harmful discourses promoted through popular physical culture. Tracking the appearance of the Playboy bunny logo through each of the four settings was revealing. The photographs of the girls' bedrooms in particular illustrated some of the ways in which the global and the local can be understood as embedded within each other. Holloway and Valentine (2000: 767) suggest:

Local cultures need to be thought of as products of interaction-interaction in which both local and global influences matter-and hence neither as closed and entirely local, nor undifferentiatedly global.

The use of visual methodologies in this study clearly highlighted the porosity of the boundaries between the various settings in which these girls played out their lives. Paradoxically, while the boundaries of school, home, body and community are evidently becoming more fluid and porous, the choices and pathways available to the girls are seemingly becoming more limited. The girls have less access to back regions where they can 'let their hair down' and not worry as much about their audience, and with the ever-increasing blurring of setting boundaries, their audience is gradually becoming more homogenized. They find themselves, therefore, repeatedly performing a similar role, that is, a role which devalues sport and physical activity.

Conclusion

It is often assumed that sport is a good thing and if a population does not have equitable access or, indeed, are seen not to take advantage of available opportunities to be physically active, there is a problem. The dramaturgical analysis presented in this chapter illustrates the nature and complexity of five girls' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in,

and rejection and acceptance of Sport *for All* (and related) discourses. It also unearthed many significant questions that might be fruitfully asked and answered with girls about their lives. For example, how has it transpired that many of these girls have so much responsibility in their home lives and so little in school, what does the increasing porosity of the boundaries of the settings in which these girls act mean for the development of (in)active identities, how and why have these girls come to hate their bodies? For me, at least, what the analysis revealed is that sport (or even physical activity more broadly) is a secondary and partial response to any consideration of the inequities these girls are experiencing.

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8

'At-Risk' Youth Sport Programmes: Another Way of Regulating Boys?

Rachael Hutchesson, Rylee A. Dionigi,
and Kristina Gottschall

Introduction

Community youth sport programmes often target boys who are considered 'at-risk' of failing at school or not transitioning to an 'ideal' adulthood, with the assumption that sport will 'save them from social alienation'. This chapter draws on literature which highlights that youth 'at-risk' sport-based programmes work as a form of governmentality (e.g., Coalter 2011; Curran 2010; Kelly 1998, 2007, 2011), and extends it by arguing that (1) such programmes reinforce the need for (self-) regulation among youth in this context¹; (2) sport, rather than educational success,

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is positioned as a 'way out' of social marginalisation for 'at-risk' boys; and (3) such programmes can produce an attraction to certain aspects of being a young person 'at-risk'.

To support and exemplify these claims, we draw on ethnographic data collected by the lead author. Hutchesson (2014) examined seven community youth programmes, with many of them using the arts as a focal point, but there were two that incorporated sports. The broader aim of Hutchesson's study was to examine the ways in which the 'at-risk' label is designated to, negotiated and lived by young people (who are considered marginalised or disadvantaged) participating in rural New South Wales (NSW), Australia, community-based (arts/sports) programmes. Specifically, in this chapter, we discuss data Hutchesson collected at the regional NSW Youth 'At-Risk' School-partnered Police and Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) programme, from two police youth workers (one male, one female) and seven male participants (aged 13–15 years) which included two Indigenous Australians and two Maori boys. All of the young boys were included in the programme due to their involvement in minor criminal behaviour, such as drug use and theft.²

Over a period of two months, Hutchesson (2014) collected data from participants (staff and young people) through participant observations (which involved one day per week participating in formal sessions, going on bus trips, having lunch together and playing sport) and informal interviews with youth workers and participants of the programme. The young boys were encouraged to use the researcher's video and audio recorder, as well as share or compose song lyrics, to express what was important to them. This programme used sport (touch football and kick boxing) and other physical activities (white water rafting, horse riding and go-carts/karts) as a way to improve relationships between local police and young people who had previous involvement in minor criminal activity.

The inclusion and emphasis of sport in this programme is particularly significant because all of the participants were identified as 'at risk' of dropping out of school and having little or no success in the school setting. In other words, sport, not education, appeared to be held up as the key to success for the boys in the programme. In this chapter, we consider Michel Foucault's (1983, 1990) notions of governmentality and technologies of the self/control and Stephen Lyng's (2005) theory of edgework to argue that the very programmes that are designed to counter 'risk' through

sport can actually work to maintain, create or celebrate risk. Thus, the boys who are involved in the programme feel even more alienated and disengaged from school and/or the workforce when they step outside of the 'at-risk' youth programme and return to these 'normalising' contexts.

At-risk Youth Programmes as a Form of Neoliberal Governance

There is growing concern emerging from research that youth 'at-risk' community-based programmes, particularly with a sports/arts focus, can be used as tools of neoliberal governance to keep young 'risky' people 'on track' (de St Criox 2010). Peter Kelly argued that governmentality is useful in understanding the various attempts to 'regulate young people's identities through the construction of populations of Youth at Risk' (1998: 10). In Foucault's (1991) view, 'governmentality means the complex[ity] of calculations, programmes, policies, strategies, reflections, and tactics that shape the conduct of individuals—"the conduct of conduct" for acting upon the actions of others in order to achieve certain ends' (cited in Besley 2010: 530). Governmentality involves 'governing the self' and 'governing others' (Lemke 2002: 49). It involves the 'how' of governing the state and how an individual governs their own subjectivity in this process—linking technologies of power or domination with technologies of the self (Besley 2010).

Taking this line of thought, educational and social policies that regard youth 'at-risk' sit here, coupled with funding requirements that dictate who is 'at-risk', and how the state should intervene. These are governmental technologies aimed at shaping the conduct of young people who are seen as not behaving within social norms—thus producing and managing certain young people as 'at-risk'. Bessant suggests the notion of risk 'appears to involve, in Foucault's terms, dividing practices that distinguish between those who are "at-risk" from certain "problems" and those who are not' (2001: 32). The need to define youth 'at-risk' and establish boundaries before governmental power can be exerted positions young people 'through the individualization of risk and the responsabilization of youth' (Curran 2010: 37). These strategies are ingrained within discourses of risk via neoliberal rationalities governing youth, where young people are understood as responsible for their negotiation of 'risky' situations.

Hickey-Moody's (2013) work highlighted that the success of youth 'at-risk' programmes (particularly with an arts and/or sports focus) are typically measured in terms of 'self-improvement' in line with neoliberal governance and self-regulation (e.g., Coalter 2005; Department of Culture and the Arts 2010; Dreezen 1992; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005; Gibson and Anderson 2008). This approach can appropriate arts/sports as a self-salvation project where such practices 'emerge as active management and control of problem youth populations' (Hickey-Moody 2013: 62), and ultimately reinforce that youth 'at-risk' are the 'proper subjects' for such community-based programmes.

The main aims of the PCYC programme from Hutchesson's (2014) study focused on enhancing effective relationships between 'at-risk' youth and police, to alter the negative perceptions of the police that the young people may have held, and to encourage them to remain at school. The *NSW Police Service Youth Policy Statement*, that was in effect at the time of data collection, highlighted that 'partnerships between young people, the community and the NSW Police Service [are] aimed at assisting young people [to] develop the qualities to be responsible citizens and leaders and to avoid becoming offenders or victims of crime' (NSW Police Service 2005: 14). The notion of a transition from someone who is young and not responsible to someone who is a responsible (adult) citizen is evident. This focus on a life transition is also part of the neoliberal push to produce economically productive subjects that are not a burden on society or the judicial system. Moreover, the idea of the young people needing help to 'develop the qualities to be responsible' suggests the need for self-regulation of 'risky' behaviours and dispositions in order to steer clear of criminal activity—which places onus on the young people to change, but disregards other relational factors (e.g., family, peers, education, socioeconomic status, rurality, gender and Indigeneity) that may be at play in criminal risk-taking (Kelly 2011; te Riele 2004). This approach can be seen as an extension of (neoliberal) governance, where young people are singled out by police and school teachers through their 'riskiness', and are placed into programmes to help get them 'back on track'.

A strong theme emerging from Hutchesson's (2014) study was that schooling is cited in opposition to what youth workers do effectively (such as relate well to young people). This finding suggests that educational institutions are less likely to succeed in engaging certain groups of young

people than targeted youth programmes because of the traditional and common practices used in school classrooms, such as formal teacher-centred/led lessons and knowledge transmission (Ord 2008). The youth workers from the PCYC programme believed that their casual approach and interaction was imperative in creating and maintaining successful connections with the boys throughout the sessions. It appeared that when youth workers made young people aware that they were 'on their side' when it came to perceived unfair treatment by teachers at school, a strong connection and respect between youth workers and the young people was forged. Conversations with youth workers suggested that such programmes are places for the young boys to relax and feel comfortable with people who are not there to tell them what to do, how they should act and what they should know—places where they can have 'fun' and 'perhaps have respite from managing the risks in their lives' (Curran 2010: 71).

Curran highlights how the youth workers in her study were understood as resisting neoliberal governance when the goals of the programmes were about 'wellbeing, happiness, fun, and creative expression', as adopting this approach 'limits the extent to which their programs take aim at preventing future danger and harm through the management of at risk, in spite of what their program goals are officially mandated to be' (2010: 72). This finding points to a tension in Hutchesson's (2014) study where, although there is a clear sense of fun (creative expression and wellbeing) incorporated into the programmes' goals, the 'fun' activities are used to encourage self-regulation. So what may be viewed at first as a break from their 'risky' lives (or a form of resistance by the youth workers), becomes another form of (neoliberal) surveillance where the young people continue to manage their 'riskiness', while they are both constrained and enabled (as we discuss later) through the negotiation of their identity under the 'at-risk' label.

Kicking Your Way Out of a Hard Life to Success

Sport-based approaches in areas such as youth work tend to be based on the belief that sport provides positive activities for young people, particularly youth who are considered socially vulnerable, 'at-risk' and disenfranchised (Crabbé 2007; Feinstein et al. 2007; Spaaij 2009). Sports

are typically regarded as opportunities to engage young people actively across a range of issues (Haudenhuyse et al. 2013) with successful outcomes linked to health-related, educational and social elements (for example Coalter 2011; Fraser-Thomas et al. 2005; Gould and Carson 2008; Holt 2008).

Sports programmes are also used in an attempt to reduce youth crime. For example, Nichols (2005) provided a type of manual on 'how-to-do' sports programmes to 'reduce youth crime effectively', which was aimed at managers of programmes, policy makers, researchers and university students. Morris et al.'s (2003) research looked at 175 sport-based programmes across Australia and found that 81% targeted young people who were 'at-risk' of, or engaged with, drug-use and criminal activities. On the other hand, Coalter argued that the use of sport-based approaches as ways to alleviate risky issues faced by youth, 'are mostly guided by inflated promises and lack of conceptual clarity' (2011: 473). He suggested youth 'at-risk' are less likely to engage in sport and recreation, due to their life circumstances often presenting barriers to their participation (Colthart 1996), which may be part of the attraction of these programmes for 'at-risk' youth. Coalter contends that it is not clear why organisations (such as community-based youth programmes) 'assume that participation in particular sports programmes can have certain impacts on [the young] people participating in them' (2011: 473). In the UK setting, Tacon (2007) highlighted that the use of football (soccer) to help young people in regard to social inclusion is prevalent in sports literature, yet, in line with Coalter's (2011) assertions, Tacon claims that there is little research that rigorously evaluates the effectiveness (or critiques the implications) of football-based social inclusion projects.

Notably, it is boys who are often the targets of sporting activities in community-based programmes, as if it is a 'natural' fit for them. In other words, such approaches are based on an assumption that sport will address unruly male behaviour and male aggression, and it will intervene to steer 'risky' young men back on a productive pathway—the one linear pathway towards 'ideal adulthood' (Kelly 1998, 2007; te Riele 2004). This assumption points to the question raised in the title of our chapter: Are 'at-risk' youth community-based sport programmes

another way of regulating boys? In particular, we are interested in how sport is positioned as a 'way out' of a 'hard life' for boys who are 'at-risk' of dropping out of high school and engaging in minor criminal activity.

Hutchesson (2014) observed an underlying notion that sport was being positioned as a way out for boys through the PCYC programme activities, such as a session with a guest speaker discussing how drugs ruined his life. This man was once a professional footballer (rugby league) before his drug addiction caused his downfall and landed him in gaol. His discussion with the boys focused on how he had an extremely difficult life growing up, but footy was the only place he felt confident and positive about himself, and how his decision to take drugs ruined his chance of a football career that, as he told the boys, could have let him 'have it all' (i.e., fame, money, a nice house, fancy car, etc.). The PCYC police youth workers from Hutchesson's (2014) study (Lynne and Max³) did not specifically set up being a successful male sports player as a desirable subjectivity per se. However, by using sports (in particular 'footy'/rugby league) to connect with the young people and change their negative perceptions of the police—to ultimately help prevent these young men from 'going down the wrong path'—the youth workers were using sport to reduce youth crime—they just did not do it deliberately or consciously.

Although the intention of the youth workers in inviting the guest speaker was to make the boys aware of the damage taking drugs can do, after that session a number of the boys in this programme talked to one another about 'footy as the way out'. For example, during lunch that day, there was talk about how good football is and how good they (themselves) were at it—they believed they were good enough to be professionals. So, this session with the guest speaker, in a sense, helped provide affirmation for their beliefs. There was also a session on boxing/kick-boxing which was aimed at boosting self-confidence and building on their physical skills and, as Lynne suggests, it allowed the boys 'to do something positive for a change, [something] that they know they are good at or could be good at', implying that successful future selves could be found through these sports.

In each PCYC session, and in the daily touch-footy games, the idea of self-improvement/self-salvation became apparent, with the inference being made by youth workers that sport can transform negatively viewed identities into positive ones. Sport was positioned and accepted as a way out of situations (such as schooling) where riskiness identified them as 'undesirable', 'loser' subjects, but at the same time, sport, and especially the 'risky' behaviour associated with sport, was seen by the boys as a way to get famous; particularly to the young Indigenous boys in the programme.

The notion of any form of football as 'a way out' for Indigenous young men is a particularly strong discourse in the Australian media. For instance, a newspaper article by Foster (2013) titled *Investing in Aboriginal youth will pay huge dividends* focused on Indigenous youth and football. Foster states 'Football is a gate to the world, and we owe it to Aboriginal youth to give them the opportunity to follow the same path of John Moriarty, Harry Williams, Charles Perkins, Travis Odd, Jade North and the talented Sam Kerr and Kyah Simon' (para. 2). Many male sports players identifying as Indigenous, such as John Moriarty and Charles Perkins (soccer), Arthur 'Big Artie' Beeston (rugby league), Neil 'Nicky' Winmar (AFL) and Adam Goodes (AFL) among others, have built careers as a result of sport after rising from 'tough lives'.

The above examples highlight that sport can be a way to engage 'successfully' in the world and as Bamblett's (2011) research highlights, is instrumental to the particular ways in which an overrepresentation of Indigenous people in popular sports (such as football) adds to the essentialising of an Indigenous identity. The informal conversations Hutchesson (2014) had with the boys from the PCYC programme, particularly the Indigenous and Maori boys, supported the dominant naturalising discourse about sports being the main 'way out' for young Indigenous people to succeed in society and gain some sense of respect—a discourse that provides a 'restricted representation of Indigenous Australians...that foregrounds deficit and victimhood' (Bamblett 2011: 1). This representation is taken up through the media-fuelled notion of a 'hard risky life' equating to success and is reinforced through the abundance of sports programmes for youth 'at-risk' that aim to improve their lives. The implication of this type of thinking among the boys in the programme examined by Hutchesson (2014) becomes evident below.

Risk, Sport and Fame: Walking the Risky Edge

Hutchesson's (2014) study highlighted that connections between media-glorified risk, edgework (Lyng 2005) and community-based youth 'at-risk' programmes can produce an attraction to certain aspects of being a young person 'at-risk'. A form of 'riskiness' in the media that is glorified is the notion of a 'hard risky life' equating to success in certain reality TV programmes. Graeme Turner (2006), in his article, 'The mass production of celebrity "Celetoids", reality TV and the "demotic turn"', argues 'that the function of the media has mutated as it has increasingly directly participated in the construction of cultural identity as one of its primary spheres of activity' (154). Contemporary media creates and maintains idealised subjectivities that are positioned as successful or unsuccessful on the basis of class, gender, sexual and racial lines. Allen and Mendick (2012) also see a structural shift in Western media in their work on popular culture and identity, showing 'how young people's identity work through Reality TV [RTV] involves making judgements of different ways of being and how this (re)produces social class inequalities' (460). They suggest that, despite seemingly equating success with a 'risky' or disadvantaged background, RTV ultimately holds up a middle-class subjecthood, that has agency and access to resources necessary for successful identity construction, as the ideal. This focus produces an image of the working-class as a subject 'located outside of the good authentic self' (462), and one needing to become more middle-class. It is argued that such idealised risk-taking is often viewed by young people as enabling, as a 'way out' and as a way to become somebody—become popular or famous—albeit in an 'impoverished' and/or temporary sense (Hutchesson 2014).

The boys in the PCYC programme examined by Hutchesson (2014) often talked about reality TV programmes and conversations emerged around fame being positioned as a way to escape 'a crap life', if you were not very academic. All of the boys emphasised the importance of sport in and out of school, with Scott⁴ (PCYC participant, 14 years old) and Ben⁵ (PCYC participant, 13 years old) making it very clear that the only time they felt 'liked by teachers', 'respected' or 'fit in to school', was during the school sports lessons. Despite the boys being adamant that they would stay at school and conform in certain ways, there was an underlying theme

in their talk of the lure of professional sports and the ‘risky fame’ it represented. For example, Jeff⁶ (PCYC participant, 14 years old) included this perception in the song he had composed as part of this study:

*..... Wanna be a big footy star make the crowds roar
Gotta get out of this place so I don't get chased down by the law.
Wonder if I'll ever see my name up in lights
I'll spend money, have loads of sic parties and as many girls I like.*

Here Jeff shares his aspiration to be a famous footy player (as many of the boys did) and he imagined footy as his ‘ticket out’ to start again with a clean slate. His lyrics imply certain ways to feel powerful (sport, girls, money)—that a successful performance and negotiation of sporting activities equals successful masculine identities (see Martino 2003; Saltmarsh and Youdell 2004). Throughout the informal (audio recorded) conversations with Jeff, his peers and Hutchesson, it became evident his home and school life was difficult and risk-taking was a big part of it. Another boy in the study, MC⁷ (15 years old), who identified as Indigenous Australian, repeatedly talked about his ‘brushes with the law’, retold stories of life hardships with pride and showed his prowess as a football player in the touch-football weekly sessions at PCYC (and in local competition games). MC said he wanted to be famous and play football for Melbourne Storm (a professional Australian rugby league team).

MC’s continual insistence that ‘footy’ was going to be the only way he could ‘get away from his ‘crap’ life’ aligns with Bamblett’s (2011) work which highlights how narratives around Indigenous success in other professional arenas (academic, business or otherwise) are largely absent from popular media. Bamblett stresses present day society’s limited perceptions of Indigenous people in the public sphere, where due to backward notions of ‘Aborigines’ physical prowess’ (Harris 1984: 21 cited in Bamblett 2011), sport remains possibly the only area in which success is possible. We suggest that on the one hand becoming a footy star was a way to escape the undesirable ‘at risk’ subjectivities and spaces the boys were in, but on the other hand, being a footy star required idealised risky behaviours—physical, hyper-masculine, violent and all manner of other ‘celebrity’ behaviour like drug-taking, womanising and drunken antics as

epitomised by real footy stars (e.g., AAP 2013; Ferguson 2009; Proudman 2009). Such behaviours were used by these young boys in the PCYC programme to position themselves as 'successful risky' and 'sporty' subjects, instead of 'at-risk unsuccessful' student subjects (Hutchesson 2014).

Risk-taking, fame and sport—and the taking up of desirable 'risky' subjectivities—can also be viewed in terms of Lyng's (2005) notion of edgework. Lyng (2005) refers to voluntary risk-taking as edgework, where the seduction of working the edge is strong and becomes a way of constructing the self as in *control* within particular contexts. Lyng and Matthews contend that edgework can be seen as a way to escape or resist key 'structural [and cultural] imperatives' and 'institutional routines [and constraints] of contemporary life' (2007: 5–6)—to be free from 'overwhelming social regulation' (9). They argue that if engaging in risk-taking is viewed 'as integral to the fabric of contemporary social life' (10), then risk-taking becomes part of the way individuals 'integrate themselves into the existing institutional environment that valorises risk-taking propensities and skills' (Lyng and Matthews 2007: 10); such as in Australian football (rugby league) culture. Although the edgework discussed in Laurendeau (2008) and Lyng and Matthews (2007) focuses on high-risk extreme leisure sports, it opens up a space to begin to think about forms of 'delinquent' risk-taking/edgework and how young people use edgework (and the retelling of it) to feel empowered (albeit temporarily in many instances, as it was for the young people in Hutchesson's (2014) study) and assert, negotiate and take up risky gendered (and racial) identities under the 'at-risk' label.

The evidence of edgework in the study by Hutchesson (2014) involved the young people's narratives and practices of risk-taking with drugs, alcohol, crime, the use of expletives ('profane' language) and the retelling of risk-taking in school classrooms, community programme settings and in sporting contexts (using drugs to increase performance and taking risks in the moves they make during football games to stand out in front of a crowd). Within the context of the PCYC programme, it appeared that the more 'at-risk' the boys were perceived to be, the more likely they were to gain fame/kudos from their peers and, further, this risk was believed by the boys to be key to becoming a 'famous' sportsperson. Here, we can see the notion of the seductive side of edgework (Lyng 2005),

where the taking up of 'risky' youthful identities in this regard can also provide temporary enabling aspects and affordances for the young boys. In Hutchesson's study, the young people were seen performing back identities that were preferred by youth workers' (in formal programme spaces and organised activities) and performing different 'risky' identities (e.g., retelling criminal acts) while in informal spaces, such as when travelling or having lunch on the bus. It could be viewed that the risk-taking engaged in by the young people (drugs, alcohol, crime, violence, self-harm, and acting in certain 'risky' ways in the school classroom) was a way to enter into controlled chaos within the *wild zones* (Miller 2005)—to negotiate the edge. The *wild zones* in this sense is a space where one can be ungovernable and disorderly to escape the effects of (neoliberal) governing of youth which can be oppressive, constraining and create social alienation/exclusion for certain groups of young people (Kelly 1999).

Therefore, we offer the argument that practices (often unintentional) within youth 'at-risk' community-based sports programmes and the notion of 'working the edge' (Lyng 2005), coupled with the media's overwhelming and sensationalised focus on the 'risky' or 'disadvantaged' aspect of a young person (Turner 2006), can position the taking up of a 'risky sports subjectivity' as the *only way out* of risk (not success in school or education; Hutchesson 2014); particularly for certain young people labelled 'at-risk'. For the young people in such school-partnered, community-based youth programmes, their engagement provided an opportunity to escape a schooling context where they were rendered knowable *only* through 'risky' labels, such as impossible/unsuccessful learners. At the same time, the space created within the youth programmes provided opportunities for 'risky' behaviour and identities to be idealised.

Concluding Thoughts

As the different narratives of the young people unfolded in Hutchesson's (2014) study of 'at-risk' youth programme(s), a common story was built. These young 'at risk' boys are told they need to change. They are managed and expected to self-manage along particular lines leading to a

conforming and productive adulthood. What is reaffirmed here is that they, not the system that they are alienated from, needs to change. Yet, without the skills to change, and without a youth programme that directly addresses these skills, these young people have no hope of succeeding in schooling spaces or the workplace. On the one hand it appears the approach of these 'at-risk' youth programmes is to use sport to make participants 'feel good' about themselves (perhaps as potential footy players and sporting superstars). These programmes are clearly about giving participants a break from school and having some fun too.

However, by youth workers acknowledging that certain groups of young people are defined by policy as 'at-risk' of failing or leaving school early, employing programmes that are about altering the young people's 'at-risk' behaviour, and reporting on youth using identity markers constructed through expert knowledge of youth (Kelly 2007), they (the programmes and youth workers) in effect, as Kelly suggests, render 'government more *efficient* and *effective* by facilitating earlier *identification* of those at-Risk, and by targeting *interventions* to those most at-Risk' (1998: 192 original emphasis). As with Curran's (2010) findings, Hutchesson's (2014) research showed that the programmes did provide for rewarding experiences for the young people participating (as a group), which moves away from a neoliberalised agenda focusing on individuals, yet overall, the measures of success from the youth workers (and often the young people themselves) were based around effective altering of individual behaviours and attitudes, irrespective of the fact that the youth workers expressed their thoughts on how school and current teaching strategies are not an inviting environment for certain young people. We agree with te Riele's argument that this finding does 'not necessarily warrant targeting these groups of young people for intervention, instead of targeting school systems and societal factors' (2006: 131).

Overall, we have highlighted the power/kudos sought by boys in a community, youth, sport-based programme, which indicated that they could (to a degree) resist the loser/impossible learner identity (or 'at-risk' label) placed upon them. Using Lyng's (2005) theory on edgework in combination with theories of governmentality (Kelly 1998, 2007; Foucault 1991), Hutchesson (2014) explained the seduction of youth to engage in 'risky' acts and how it can be viewed by participants as positive and enabling,

as well as how these 'risky' youth identities are, in the end, constrained by dominant discourses and structures in society. Therefore, we argue that this process of using sport-based programmes to engage and regulate boys, and (unintentionally) establish football stars as desirable selves, potentially works to further alienate and disengage these boys from school, given they have little or no history of success in the schooling space. Once these boys step outside the youth sports programme, and the particular 'powerful' subjectivity it affords them, they still do not have the education, skills or position to be recognised as successful learners or productive citizens.

Notes

1. In problematising and analysing the dialogue of the young people and staff, we are not discounting the benefits of these programmes for the young people, such as the potential for gaining a constructive sense of self-respect, self-worth and self-confidence.
2. Although all boys attended the same local high school, the older, 'riskier' boys (i.e., who had criminal records) were asked by the police to join the programme, while the teachers from the high school selected the other boys who attended the programme.
3. Lynne and Max both joined the police force at an early age and had lots of experience with young people who they consider to have difficult lives and are labelled 'at-risk'. There was obvious passion from both youth workers for running this programme and they connected well with youth, and all of the boys appeared to respect them.
4. Scott identifies as being Indigenous. He likes to be the centre of attention—and often tried to be the leader of the PCYC boys. He was very open to discussing anything Hutchesson asked about in great depth. As with MC, he is very reflective but not hypocritical, he accepts that he perhaps should not engage in illicit activities and tells the boys not to, but admits he continues to do so. He has some disdain for the police in general and discusses being pulled over and searched for drugs constantly or questioned in regard to break and entries.
5. Ben identifies as being Maori. His pale complexion, however, was the topic of many heated discussions between Ben and John (another member identifying as Maori). The group refused to accept Ben was Maori because of his pale skin colour. He played the role of a very tough kid which was

taken very lightly by the others. He was a loud personality, yet never really was heard by the other boys in the group. He disliked the police in general. He believed teachers are racist as they 'do not like Kiwi people'. It was for this reason that he believed he was singled out and ostracised by teachers. Ben was the only one in the group who professed his hatred of drugs and refusal to take them.

6. Jeff has an Anglo Saxon background. At the time of the study he had 11 people living at home with him: Dad and his girlfriend, 5 sisters, 3 brothers and a nephew. He is the second oldest. He was basically a quiet boy, but because of his solid size and age he sits on the top end of the pecking order among the PCYC boys. He really enjoyed playing football and wanted to play in one of the 'big teams' one day at the national level. Jeff had negative feelings towards police as he explained he used to get into a lot of trouble by them for engaging in criminal behaviour. He would cheer at the other boy's retelling of risky behaviour and boasted of taking 'speed' (an illegal drug) once to enhance his football performance.
7. MC was very charismatic and the leader of the PCYC pack. Larger and older than most of the boys, he controlled the dynamics when he was present. Hutchesson had contact with him outside the programme as he was an acquaintance of her son's. His dialogue appeared game-like, as on one hand it was reflective, suggesting to the adults that the other young boys in the group should learn from his mistakes. While on the other hand he acted tough and proudly revealed his engagement in criminal activities to the boys while the youth workers were not present. He would stir trouble between the boys without the youth workers knowing and then solve it to gain respect from the adults. Despite the boys and Hutchesson seeing this game play, no one confronted or challenged his control. He had some disdain for the police, but only to the ones who would catch him drinking and make him tip out his alcohol onto the ground or the ones who would constantly pull him over to check his bags for drugs. MC has had a lot of contact with courts and the police.

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9

Sport is Not for All: The Transformative (Im)possibilities of Sport for Young Disabled People

Hayley Fitzgerald

Introduction

In the UK, since the 1970s, the mantra of ‘Sport for All’ has gained significant momentum in policy and practice. Indeed, at a strategic level, the Council of Europe continues to advocate its collective support for a Sport for All principle (Council of Europe 2015). Relatedly, during this period, there has been important progress associated with the rights of disabled people in different spheres of life including sport (Shakespeare 2012). Taken together, these kinds of developments have inspired some commentators to assert that the world of sport is now a much better place for disabled people to occupy. These optimists point to more programmes targeting disabled people, improved participation, growing media presence at key events such as the Paralympics, the ‘integration’ of disability sport at mainstream sport events and a commitment to inclusive education. From this perspective, it could be claimed we are nearing DePauw’s

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(1997) vision for the '(In)Visibility of disability in sport'. According to DePauw this is a transformative position whereby the sporting endeavours of disabled people are recognised and acknowledged in similar ways to other people engaging in sport. Drawing on data generated with disabled people, this chapter interrogates the mantra of Sport for All by focusing on the transformative (im)possibilities of sport for young disabled people.

This chapter begins by considering how Sport for All is most frequently enacted in order to increase sport participation by disabled people. Following this, consideration is given to a number of alternative approaches that could be initiated to promote Sport for All. Building on the thinking of Barton (1993, 2009) and DePauw (1997) and drawing on data generated from a number of research projects (Fitzgerald 2003, 2005, 2012, 2013; Fitzgerald and Kirk 2009), consideration is given to what disabled people can tell us about their experiences of Sport for All. After this, a number of enduring issues that remain the nemesis of Sport for All for disabled people are discussed. These are: (a) committed guardians preserving the exclusionary features of sport; (b) a sports infrastructure promoting separation rather than inclusion; and (c) prominence of a normative non-disabled body. In concluding, I argue that the mantra of Sport for All will continue to have limited success until sport begins to more fully interrogate its relationship with disabled people.

Sport for All and Disability

Internationally, disabled people have increasingly been targeted in sports policy and practice and they continue to be one of the key recipient groups of Sport for All resources. Strategically, Sport for All is advocated through the Council of Europe and recently the International Olympic Committee announced Sport for All as a priority and established a Sport for All Commission (International Olympic Commission 2013). A search of the internet also reveals that many national and local campaigns have adopted the Sport for All strapline to promote various programmes and initiatives. For disabled people, Sport for All is most frequently enacted through policy and programmes that strive to increase participation.

The underlying assumption here is that supporting more disabled people to engage in sport is a good thing. After all, it is often assumed that this will help to bridge the participation gap existing between disabled people and other groups within society (Moran and Block 2010).

Typically, a combination of two approaches is adopted to increase sports participation for disabled people. First, disabled people are encouraged to participate in mainstream sports. The merit of adopting this approach to Sport for All is that the possibilities open up for disabled and non-disabled people to engage together. This mirrors broader developments associated with disability rights and calls for a more inclusive society. However, it should be acknowledged that some disabled people continue to find it difficult to access or play sports designed for non-disabled people. Moreover, non-disabled people may be less receptive to participate with disabled people if they perceive the sport and their performance will be compromised. To this end, this approach to Sport for All can become delimiting when the systems and stakeholders supporting sport do not reconsider how sport should better reflect the needs of disabled people.

A second approach utilised to promote Sport for All for disabled people is through separate dedicated disability sport provision. Through this approach, sports are modified or new ones developed specifically for disabled people. Here, the philosophy of Sport for All is underpinned by a recognition that sports have to change in order to enable participation by disabled people. The merit of adopting this approach to Sport for All is that disabled people can participate on their terms and have the opportunity to engage competitively. Within this setting disability sport rules, coaching and facilities will take account of the needs of disabled participants. The challenge to this approach to Sport for All is that it reinforces a status quo that normalises the separation of disabled people within society. More broadly, disabled activists have contested this kind of exclusion by campaigning for a more inclusive and equitable society. Could the separation promoted through disability sport be counterproductive to these kinds of wider concerns to address exclusion within society? Or is this separation not such a bad thing if it is achieving the goal of more participation by disabled people in sport through a Sport for All approach?

Whilst inclusion into mainstream sport and dedicated disability sport remain the two key delivery mechanisms for supporting Sport for All for disabled people, it is worth considering what kind of alternative futures could be initiated in the spirit of Sport for All. For instance, if these approaches continue to dominate then perhaps more work needs to be done to ensure disability sport and disabled people are recognised and valued in similar ways to mainstream sport and non-disabled people. In this respect, the ethos of Sport for All moves beyond merely focusing on active participation and challenges sport and society to re-examine how disability can be valued in order to achieve parity of status with non-disabled people and mainstream sport. It should be acknowledged that this is a position that other groups including women continue to advocate for in sport and where only marginal gains have been made. The difficulty moving forward here is that sport is largely valued through normative and hegemonic ideals, that is, a person participating in sport is expected to move their body in specific ways when catching a ball, swinging a tennis racket or hurdling. These activities require a willing and adaptable body in order to produce a competent performer. And those participating in sport seem happy continuing to support these kinds of ideals.

Another approach that Sport for All could adopt concerns dismantling the distinction between disability sport and mainstream sport. This approach is similar to the traditional approach outlined earlier in relation to encouraging disabled people to participate in mainstream sport with non-disabled people. However, a distinctive aspect of this alternative approach would be to ensure disabled people are automatically included in activities rather than their inclusion considered more as an after-thought. By eliminating the categories distinguishing mainstream and disability sport attention would be given to how sports, and those participating, could be more equally valued. Again, this approach requires a significant change in mind-set and may not appeal to those content with the current state of sport.

Another alternative future that extends the previous approach concerns the development of new sports that enable disabled and non-disabled people to play together. Similar to the previous approach, these sports would benefit from not being categorised as mainstream or disability

sport but rather sports that everyone can play. This approach is very much about ensuring that sports of the future are created from the outset with different people in mind. The challenge here would be to create the sports, stimulate interest and establish wider credibility for the new sports.

These alternative approaches to Sport for All require those delivering sport to change. Therefore, the extent to which any of these alternative futures are viable will be contingent on a willingness of sport to move forward in different ways. Having reviewed the current and possible options for Sport for All, attention will now turn to how these policy directions position disabled people in relation to sport.

Locating Disabled People in Sport

Sport policymakers and providers have used Sport for All as a means of promoting increased participation. In doing this, providers are acknowledging that sport is not always for all and may marginalise some, including disabled people. Indeed, the different responses and approaches to Sport for All outlined above can be situated within a number of locations articulated by DePauw (1997). In the first location, some disabled people are excluded from sport and this is exemplified by the 'invisibility of disability in sport'. This position emphasises that sport is not for all and would be supported by the well-documented barriers and challenges to participation (Moran and Block 2010). In part, an approach to Sport for All that attempts to increase sports participation within mainstream and dedicated disability sport provision is a strategy to move disabled people out of this invisible and excluded location. Second, DePauw (1997) suggests disabled people may be visible in sport as athletes with disabilities, that is, the 'visibility of disability in sport'. In this location, disability is visible but considered inferior to the position held by non-disabled people. For example, dedicated disability sports adapted from mainstream sports (e.g. wheelchair basketball and rugby) are often seen as secondary to the sports they were developed from. In this position, disabled people engaging in sport hold a lesser position and this mirrors how society has more generally accepted medical model understandings of disability. Here, Sport for All is advocated through attempts to increase participation,

but little is done to disrupt the limitations of sport (Barton 1993, 2009). Finally, DePauw (1997) argues that disabled people may be visible in sport as athletes, the '[in] Visibility of disAbility in sport'. DePauw (1997) indicates this is an aspirational location and would require sport to transform and be more inclusive. This more radical mantra of Sport for All is signalling a need for sport to significantly change and positively account for difference. This kind of transformative location would align with the alternative possibilities for Sport for All highlighted earlier.

Young Disabled People Experiencing Sport for All

The key strategy used to promote Sport for All is through the development of programmes or initiatives that aim to increase sports participation. Within mainstream and dedicated disability sport settings, my research with young disabled people reveals diverse experiences of sport participation. This research stems from my work as a practitioner within disability sport where I came to recognise the importance and benefits of ensuring young disabled people felt included in sporting programmes. In particular, I developed an understanding of the importance and value of communicating in accessible ways. For example, when working with people with learning disabilities, I advertised sports opportunities using alternative formats such as pictured Makaton symbols (a form of sign language). When facilitating meetings with this group, I used easy speak and limited my use of technical jargon. As an academic I have also adopted these accessible approaches in my research and worked with young disabled people using drama, drawings, focus groups, photo elicitation, Makaton, pictorial questionnaires and attempted to work with young people as co-researchers (Fitzgerald 2003, 2005, 2012, 2013; Fitzgerald and Kirk 2009). By researching inclusively and centralising the voices of young disabled people, my work has challenged existing research in sport that often prioritises the views of carers and other professionals and dismisses young disabled people as illegitimate sources of research information.

Some of the experiences of young disabled people recounted during my research offer insights into how Sport for All can be enabling. What do these experiences tell us about how Sport for All is working for young disabled people? For example, it is clear that within mainstream settings young disabled people enjoy sport, feel included and experience success. Here Dave, aged 13, experiencing a hearing impairment, emphasised a range of mainstream contexts within which he enjoyed playing sport with his friends:

I can't wait to do sport. I would say it's the best thing. At school, at breaks, away from school. It's my favourite thing to do. I'll have a go and try anything. If I fancy getting into a new sport I'll just go for it. The last I tried was basketball and before that tennis. You have to try to decide but they weren't for me. I've kept going with football, I'm not the best but as long as I'm with me mates I'm happy Dave [community coach] knows I need to practice things a bit more and like he'll help me to see how I can tweak things to work for me.

Within a mainstream setting Helen, aged 12, experiencing a visual impairment, also expressed a positive outlook towards her participation at a trampolining club:

I love trampolining. My body feels like its flying high in the sky. It takes skill and concentration to keep control. You have to trust your friends on the edge, they're ready if you get into trouble. I must admit sometimes I do get close to the edge and that'll stress people, like Gemma and Ross. But the ones who know me know its because my sights not good. It's no big deal really and they know. So I suppose get ready just in case. They're used to me been around and give me help when I need it. We all take it in turns but when I'm waiting I feel like it takes forever before I get my turn.

The experiences of Dave and Helen illustrate that sport is possible for some disabled people. They are engaging in mainstream sport and recall positive and enjoyable experiences. Here sport has not been transformed, but rather replicates the dominant model and these young disabled people are able to fit into this approach to provision. For these young people,

mainstream sport seems to work because there is minimal or no adaptation, other participants are supportive and coaches take time to support some minor adjustments.

Within a disability sport setting, Sport for All can also successfully support sport participation when coaches and participants are receptive to the different needs of young disabled people. During some research focusing on PE and community sport, Tom, aged 13, who uses crutches to support his walking, reflected on a number of qualities he believed were conducive to his continued participation in community sport:

At the Inclusive Club we are all the same, well different, but what I mean is we all have a disability. But when I'm there it's not like that. The coaches are good and the volunteers and they know us, what we can do and what we can't do. But you know they're all like that. I know what Simon and Jess struggles with and if I'm partnered with them I won't throw as hard. 'Cause I know they'll be thinking of getting the catch and passing There's a good feel at the Club and we all go to the café after. I know that's not sport but at my other club I can't get to the café.

Tom highlights how qualities associated with feeling similar to others around him, having understanding coaches and broader access issues relating to the café all contribute to his positive sporting experience at this club.

These extracts illustrate that Sport for All can work for some young disabled people and it is likely to continue to work in similar ways for others. It is those young people who most easily fit into mainstream and disability sport that will benefit from the current approach to Sport for All. I would argue that more significant inroads could be made in promoting Sport for All for a wider range of disabled people if further consideration is given to re-examining how disability is valued, dismantling the distinction between disability sport and mainstream sport and considering the possibilities for developing new sports. Indeed, as I next outline, there are a number of enduring issues that remain the nemesis of Sport for All for more young disabled people. I believe that taken together these hinder the transformative possibilities of Sport for All for young disabled people.

The Transformative (Im)possibilities of Sport for Young Disabled People

Committed Guardians Preserving Exclusionary Features of Sport

It is widely recognised that one of the goals of sport concerns cultural preservation, which supports an environment enabling the key features of sport to continue to be reproduced (Seidentop 2002). Coaches, PE teachers, volunteers, family and players all serve as committed guardians working to preserve sport. This commitment to preservation is anchoring sporting practices in a way that may thwart the possibilities for any kind of change that supports Sport for All for young disabled people. In the following interview extract, a mainstream PE teacher with over ten years of teaching experience reflected on her attempts to ‘include’ a disabled student in an after-school netball activity:

... we’ve got her [*a disabled student*] as the mascot for the team. I’ve explained that she can’t take part in the games because the other schools would not take into account her disability. I know she would like to train with us but it’s just not possible, it would be too hard for her to play proper netball. So, she knows she’s part of the team because she’s the team mascot. She’s also coming along to the cheerleading.

This committed guardian is preserving the rules of the game and seems to be supporting the continuation of this traditional inter-school competition. In doing this, there is a possibility that this position could reinforce a less favourable and medical model orientated view of the student in question.

The family can also act as a guardian preserving exclusionary features to ensure sport is not for all. Indeed, the normative assumptions about sport pervading the media, schooling, PE and youth sport also circulate in, and between, the family. I found that key family members can become the gatekeepers enabling or restricting access to sporting opportunities (Fitzgerald and Kirk 2009). As part of some focus group discussions about PE, James, aged 13, who uses a walking frame, highlighted how he

believed his teacher and mum closed off the opportunity for him to play rugby: 'Mr. Jones [*PE teacher*] and mum say I don't have to. So I don't'. Similarly, during an interview focusing on PE and community sport Jess, aged 14, with cerebral palsy (affecting the left side of her body) stated, 'Basically if my dad doesn't think I should do something I don't. I wasn't allowed to do basketball and football and volleyball'. Of course, it should be acknowledged that these reflections are from the perspective of the young people and Mr. Jones and the other adults mentioned may have different perceptions of how they support sporting opportunities of James and Jess.

Beyond activity participation, the family can also serve as a guardian for sports consumption and for some young disabled people this could be more restricted when compared to other siblings. As Adam, aged 14, who uses a wheelchair, reflected during an interview, 'My brothers get loads of sports kit off mum and dad mum and dad say I don't need the kit because I don't play'.

As illustrated earlier in this chapter, coaches can positively influence sporting experiences. However, they can also act as guardians preserving sport and this outlook can deter sports participation by young disabled people. For example, Michelle, aged 35, who had competed nationally in athletics for people with physical disabilities, recalled during an interview her experience of trying to get involved at a mainstream community sports club:

My parents have this view that I can do anything I want to and they push me to always have a try. Sometimes you don't know what you're going to get. I saw a poster [for athletics] and thought I can do that. When I got there I was told 'we can't do anything for you, you need to go to the disability club'. That was me getting told not to bother coming back. If coaches are like that you don't want to go back, it's deflating and so brutal. Clubs shouldn't be so unwelcoming but it happens.

According to Michelle's account the coach seemed unsupportive of her attempt to take up athletics and she recalled the coach recommending participation through a separate disability club. Of course, the coach may have been trying to be helpful by suggesting this alternative, but Michelle saw this response as unsupportive.

Sport for All has emerged through a policy imperative and it continues to be acknowledged by many as an aspiration to work towards. However, the mediators responsible for supporting change (such as coaches, PE teachers, volunteers, family and players) seem to be a conduit for preserving and guarding exclusionary features to ensure sport is not for all. What conditions would need to be in place to transform these guardians into committed mediators celebrating different sporting bodies?

A Sports Infrastructure Promoting Separation

Another enduring issue regarding the transformative (im)possibilities of sport for young disabled people concerns a sports infrastructure that promotes the separation rather than inclusion of disabled people in sport. It is well documented that disabled people have historically been separated from society and this is also evident in sport (Shakespeare 2012). Traditionally, mainstream sports organisations (and their guardians) have not taken responsibility for supporting disabled people and instead separate disability sport organisations have been created. This structural separation has served to legitimise disability sport as peripheral to mainstream sport and in this way confirming an inferior position that DePauw (1997) describes as ‘visibility of disability in sport’. For some young disabled people, one of the consequences of marginal recognition can be exclusion. Indeed, guardians of mainstream sport may take a view that disabled people should not participate in sport or should engage separately with other disabled people. In the research I have undertaken in schools, many disabled students have reflected on feelings of exclusion (Fitzgerald 2005). For example, here Jane, aged 13 years old experiencing a visual impairment, talked about how the PE teacher made her feel in the ‘problem pile’ and insignificant in PE:

I get asked all the time, ‘do you want to sit out’. I feel like if I do it [take part in PE] I’m getting in the way. I say I’m not bothered and the teacher tells me to go to the computers. It’s not bad really, getting my homework done at school. What I feel like is, it’s like the teacher sorts problems out all in one go, no kit, wrong kit, misbehaving and me. Can you see I’m on the problem pile?

In DePauw's (1997) terms, this constitutes the 'invisibility of disability in sport' and to a large extent this absence has been normalised by guardians of sport, such as Jane's PE teacher, who perpetuate a practice of exclusion. Other students in my research also talked about how they were often separated from their non-disabled classmates during PE and believed this highlighted negative differences between them and their non-disabled peers. Whilst recognising there is much debate about inclusion in schools, it would appear that this kind of arrangement may contribute to practices that normalise the separation of disabled people from PE, sport and society.

Of course, the creation of disability sports has opened up the possibilities for Sport for All. That is, disabled people can play an adapted version of mainstream sports (e.g. wheelchair basketball, blind football, and table cricket) or engage in sports specifically developed for them (e.g. boccia and goalball). Indeed, over the past 20 years disability sport has enhanced the access, opportunities and participation by disabled people. At one level, it could be argued that disability sport provides the vehicle for the aspirations of Sport for All to be worked towards. After all, disability sport has opened doors that have traditionally been firmly closed. Supporting this outlook, though, masks a reality of sport that is perhaps less palatable: that these separate disability sport versions mimic the segregation disabled people have endured in institutions, asylums and special schools. Through this version of (disability) Sport for All, the dominant and exclusive sports system remains unchanged and only marginally accommodates disabled people by supporting separation in sport. Is disability sport, therefore, simply acting as a regulatory mechanism that gives disabled people the impression of parity of status with non-disabled people in sport? Here, sport is for all but on terms that do not bring into question its normative constitution.

Prominence of a Normative Non-disabled Body

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that if sport is to transform into Sport for All it requires the valuing of disabled bodies and disability sport in similar ways to mainstream sport and non-disabled people. Currently, it is a certain kind of physicality that is celebrated in PE,

community sport, on TV, in the sports pages of newspapers and through advertising. Barton (1993, 2009) argues that the physicality celebrated in sport is often unobtainable by many people, including disabled people. The young disabled people interviewed in my research with physical disabilities were very sensitive to ways in which their physicality did not match up to their non-disabled classmates.

Most of the boys are bigger than me and I'm not going to get that tall and they're getting bigger and in basketball I haven't got a chance. What it's like, well like I can't get the ball and they don't pass to me and they're bigger and faster and I'll run and try, I'm trying but, that's it, it's hard, they're bigger than me. (James)

I'd say it's easier for everyone in PE. I'm using, it's all coming from one side [of] my body, when I throw I use my strong arm. No power in the other, watch the others, you see they use both. I can't use both so I'm not as good. (Tom)

Here, the students clearly highlight the ways in which they perceive their physicality as not matching up to that of their non-disabled classmates. They are also acutely aware of the consequences—not getting passed the ball and feeling less competent.

Barton (1993) and DePauw (1997) have argued that disabled people are often measured against idealised notions of normality and it was evident from these student responses that they too were conscious of the ways in which PE gives prominence to a normative non-disabled body. The mediators of sport discussed earlier such as coaches, PE teachers, volunteers and family are important catalysts in advocating the valuing of different bodies. This requires these mediators to be receptive towards DePauw's (1997) transformative possibilities. For example, James' excerpt illustrates how he recognises he is 'at an advanced level', because he has the challenge of negotiating how he uses his walking frame within PE. However, he is also aware that his PE teacher did not value this additional skill:

With my [walking] frame it makes PE different for me. I mean it's the same in that I'm in my class with my mates. I get to do it all. It's just like any subject we do Like I'm with my friends and do what they do. I would say, I have more things to think about you know. You know, it's like I've got

more equipment to think about. I'd say it makes me very skilled, at an advanced level. I have to think about how I use my frame. So I've got to do what everyone else does and to do this have to figure out how to move, like figure out how my frame will help me. It's easy for the boys who run normally and they shouldn't get credit from winning, that's just easy. Give them a frame and see what they think then. Mr Davies has no idea 'bout me and what I can do cause he's just looking at the good boys, the ones playing for the school teams, the ones who look good, who do what he tells them, they win. I can't do that. I can't be like them. (James)

This thoughtful account highlights how James takes responsibility for establishing how to manoeuvre his walking frame in order to participate in PE. Interestingly, it is James initiating the adaptations and in this way demonstrates how he knows the possibilities of this body and walking frame. In contrast, according to James, the PE teacher seems more concerned to support classmates who exhibit ability in more traditional and normative ways. From James' reflection it seems to be him rather than his PE teacher who is beginning to recognise DePauw's (1997) transformative possibilities for sport. By extending Sport for All beyond merely increasing sports participation and instead addressing how participants, skills and sports are valued, I believe the possibilities could open up for different kinds of bodies like James' to be acknowledged in more positive terms. However, this requires sports participants (such as James and his classmates) and mediators (such as PE teachers) to think differently and recognise different kinds of potential in sport.

Conclusion

Whilst the philosophy of Sport of All should perhaps be commended on the grounds that there is some recognition of inequality in sports participation, there also remains an impasse where the reality of Sport for All has not been achieved (Hylton and Totten 2013). When Sport for All is considered in relation to disabled people, a number of questions emerge: should Sport for All just be a matter of fitting disabled people into the sports that non-disabled people play? Is separate dedicated sport provision

counterproductive to broader concerns for an inclusive society? How can a normative sports system and practices change to better serve disabled people? What conditions need to be in place to support a sporting community that more equally values the sporting endeavours of disabled people in similar ways to non-disabled people? In relation to these questions, consideration also needs to be given to the role disabled people could play in working towards Sport for All.

If we are to move from the dominant approach of Sport for All focusing on increasing participation, I believe sport needs to tackle a number of enduring issues that remain the nemesis of Sport for All for young disabled people. However, I am also cognisant that addressing these issues will be contingent upon those institutions and individuals who have already invested in sport recognising there is a need to support change.

Perhaps the key to forwarding change to promote Sport for All lies with disabled people themselves. Indeed, disabled people have a history of mobilising in order to challenge and rearticulate their position in different spheres of life. There are some responses by disabled people that may offer the possibilities of moving towards Sport for All. For example, a small but growing number of disabled people are becoming part of the infrastructure of sport by taking on roles in governing bodies, holding coaching positions or managing sport. Within mainstream and disability sport settings these individuals could become key advocates for disabled people and serve as a continued reminder for other practitioners to more fully consider how sport can be enabling for disabled people. The challenge here is to convince disabled people that they have a role to play in reconfiguring rather than reinforcing current systems and practices in sport.

Another response by disabled people that may offer the possibilities of moving towards Sport for All concerns the inclusion of non-disabled people in disability sports. I suggested earlier in this chapter that Sport for All could be worked towards by eliminating the categories distinguishing mainstream and disability sport. With this in mind it is interesting to note that a number of disability sports have actively sought to include non-disabled people as participants. Inclusion in these contexts has focused on non-disabled people becoming the recipients of inclusion rather than the conventional model that positions disabled people

requiring inclusion. If disability sports were to consider more fully how they could appeal to, and include, non-disabled people this may lead to a greater recognition of disability sports—as sports—and with this an increased valuing of disabled people participating in sport.

Looking to the future, as technological advancements continue to influence sport, these developments could also transform Sport for All for disabled people. For example, more sophisticated prostheses that extend movement possibilities when playing sport may eventually become commonplace and could lead to the inclusion of ‘cybathletes’ in community sport and established national sporting events. Of course, technological developments within traditional sports will also require acceptance by committed guardians preserving sport who may need persuading of the merits of recognising such technological progression and the participants utilising these resources.

Different possibilities for Sport for All for disabled people will only emerge if providers and participants of sport itself are open and willing to change. The catalyst for change needs to come from a combination of sources including receptive guardians of sport, disabled people and embracing change associated with technology. What is important here is that the Sport for All policy is not left to merely signify attempts to increase participation. Sport for All should be much more than this and it needs to be continually interrogated in relation to how this approach can enhance the position and value of disabled people in sport.

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Part III

Sport in Adulthood

10

Adult Sport Participation and Life Transitions: The Significance of Childhood and Inequality

David Haycock and Andy Smith

Introduction

It is now well documented that in very many countries there exists a strong ideological view which links sport participation with the promotion of good physical, psychological and social health (Waddington 2000). This view is one that is frequently used to justify investment in public policies and programmes which have as their objective the promotion of ‘Sport for All’. The almost uncritical acceptance of the view which links sport with good health has also been strengthened by the growth of wealth and income inequalities (Dorling 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010) and so-called ‘unhealthy lifestyles’ which are, in turn, commonly believed to be both a cause and a solution to declining rates of sport participation. This chapter examines policy aspirations for promoting Sport for All in light of existing data on adult sport participation, the impact of life transitions on engagement in sport

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over the life course and how the childhood life stage provides the foundation for unequal propensities in sport participation during adulthood.

Sport Policy and Mass Sport Participation

Writing in 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) noted that physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6 per cent of deaths globally), and that levels of physical inactivity:

are rising in many countries with major implications for the general health of people worldwide and for the prevalence of NCDs [noncommunicable diseases] such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer and their risk factors such as raised blood pressure, raised blood sugar and overweight ... It is estimated currently that of every 10 deaths, that 6 are attributable to noncommunicable conditions. (WHO 2010: 10)

In the light of these health conditions, low levels of sport participation—as a component of physical activity—have been identified as a cause for concern, especially in parts of Europe where an alleged commitment to Sport for All is expressed in much sport policy. Despite increases in sport participation among adults and young people from the 1970s, sport participation has now reached a point of stagnation in many countries throughout Europe (Downward and Rascuite 2015; Rowe 2015; Sport England 2014a). For example, in a review of participation in the 27 European Union Member States in 2005, van Tuyckom and Scheerder (2010) reported that, on average, 61 per cent of Europeans were defined as ‘active participants’ in leisure-time physical activity during the last seven days, though this varied between Member States. As discussed in Chapter 3 of this volume (see Scheerder, Vandermeerschen and Breedveld), the top five countries with the highest proportion of sports-active citizens were: Finland (81 per cent), the Netherlands (77 per cent), Austria (76 per cent), Lithuania and Germany (both 75 per cent). This compared to just under six-in-ten respondents from the UK (57 per cent), while those countries with the fewest participants were Hungary (52 per cent), Greece (49 per cent), Malta (46 per cent), Romania (43 per cent) and Portugal (39 per cent) (van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010). In this regard, sport participation was more

common among citizens in northern Europe and especially among those in Scandinavian countries (van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010).

In European countries such as Britain, sport participation has been described as ‘becoming increasingly unequally distributed’ (Coalter 2007: 64), with evidence from successive sweeps of Sport England’s *Active People Survey* (APS) consistently indicating that, in England, sport participation is most common among groups including the young, males, non-disabled people, those with higher incomes and higher education qualifications, and people who are in paid employment (Coalter 2013; Farrell et al. 2014). Between April 2013 and April 2014, 36 per cent of adults (aged 16 and above) participated at least once in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport, but more males (41 per cent) did so compared to females (30 per cent). Those in the managerial and professional classes were also more likely to participate at least once per week (43 per cent) compared to those in the intermediate class (34 per cent), small employers/own account workers (33 per cent), and the lowest ranked social groups (25 per cent) (Sport England 2014b). Adults aged 16–25 (55 per cent) who reported no life-limiting disability (39 per cent) were also more likely to participate than those 26 years old and above (18 per cent) and disabled people (18 per cent), respectively, while no differences were observed in the participation of White British (36 per cent) and black and minority ethnic groups (36 per cent) (Sport England 2014b). Overall, studies of sport participation in the UK have:

exhibited consistent correlations with aspects of social structure such [as] sex, level of education, age and social class. Even in times of increasing aggregate participation, the relationships between the rates of participation of these social groups remained relatively constant. An appropriate metaphor might be an escalator—although all were moving up, the relationship between the various steps on the escalator remained relatively constant—this applied both when participation was increasing and decreasing. (Coalter 2013: 5)

Given the persistence of such socially structured and consistent correlations, Coalter (2013: 18) also noted that sport participation might be regarded as ‘epiphenomenal, a secondary set of social practices dependent on and reflecting more fundamental structures, values and processes’ associated with wider social inequalities. In this regard, it might be argued

that various aspects of social inequality typically precede sport participation (Coalter 2013), and limit the degree to which the aspirational targets of Sport for All policies are likely to be realized.

Sport Participation and Life Transitions

The impact of social inequalities is compounded, to a greater or lesser degree, by major life events and socially structured life transitions which have consistently been shown to impact on sport participation (Haycock and Smith 2014a; Lunn et al. 2013; Roberts and Brodie 1992). Although drop-out from sport occurs in all ages and is structured by inequalities such as gender and social class, it is during youth and young adulthood that drop-out is heaviest and many fail to return, or participate regularly, during adulthood where the trend is often towards doing less or nothing (Lunn 2010; Lunn et al. 2013; Roberts and Brodie 1992; Rowe 2015). It is also clear that for many young people, team sports often become no longer organizationally convenient by the time they reach the end of compulsory schooling. For those who remain sports-active, this often occurs in conjunction with another significant social process that develops especially rapidly from mid- to late-adolescence: the individualization of activity in which more flexible, partner and individually-orientated sports (e.g. squash and badminton) and 'lifestyle activities' (e.g. running, cycling, swimming, going to the gym) can be accommodated within broader changes in leisure lifestyles and are more likely to survive the transition into young adulthood (Lunn 2010; Lunn et al. 2013; Roberts and Brodie 1992).

The significance of life transitions for making sense of changes in sport participation over the life course was similarly emphasized in a study of sport participation in Ireland (though the point applies to other countries), which reported that whether 'people remain active across their lifetimes is not primarily determined by whether they are active as children, but by transitions that occur as they grow up, mature and progress through adulthood' (Lunn et al. 2013: ix). More particularly, it has been claimed that 'participation as a child and as a young adult appears to be strongly related to transitions into and out of educational institutions'

(Lunn 2010: 714). But what does the evidence suggest about the impact of educational attainment—which is said to be ‘a particularly strong and enduring determinant of participation’ (Lunn 2010: 717)—on the sporting portfolios of those who remain sports-active in the transitions towards and during adulthood? And what does this suggest about the likely effectiveness of attempts to promote sport participation among the population?

Education and Sport Participation

It is now well known from international evidence that two significant predictors of sport participation and physical inactivity associated with social class are levels of education and income. For example, Coalter (2007: 48) has noted that ‘those most likely to participate in sport are from the higher socio-economic groups and have stayed in education after the minimum school-leaving age’. This is said to be particularly true throughout Europe where in 2005, 69 per cent of those who completed their education after the age of 21 in European Member States were currently sports-active compared to 39 per cent of those who did so before age 15 (Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010). More recent studies of European sport participation have also concluded that those with higher levels of education are more likely to be sports-active (e.g. Breivik and Hellevik 2014; Fridberg 2010; Lunn et al. 2013).

The findings of these studies—which are thought to be indicative of what Lunn et al. (2013: 97) refer to as ‘the sporting advantage associated with staying on longer in full-time education’—are similar to those undertaken in Britain. Warde (2006: 110), for example, has noted that educational experience ‘is much more significant’ than gender and age in predicting sport participation and that someone with a degree is, all other factors taken into account, almost four times more likely than someone without any qualifications to engage in a sport’. Based on data from over one million adults (aged 16 and over) living in England, Farrell et al. (2014) have also noted that the better educated and higher earners were less likely to be physically inactive and that this did not change substantially when levels of deprivation and other regional

characteristics were accounted for, and was observed for both males and females when modelled separately. Among the education-related effects, degree educated males and females were said to ‘only have a 12 per cent chance of being physically inactive, whilst those with no qualifications are around three times as likely to be physically inactive’ (Farrell et al. 2014: 57). Respondents with the lowest income also had ‘more than a 30 per cent chance of doing no sustained physical activity in contrast to those in the highest band ... [who had] a less than 10 per cent chance’ (Farrell et al. 2014: 57).

Given the longstanding links between levels of income, standards of education and other privileges associated with belonging to the higher social classes, the social differences in sport participation between the degree educated and those with lower (or no) educational qualifications are not surprising. As with sport, participation in education (especially higher education) remains closely associated with social class and linked in complex ways to the social reproduction of other sources of inequality which are being strengthened by neo-liberal ideologies and practices (economic, cultural, and political) that increasingly dominate thinking about the delivery of education and other public services (including sport) (Ball 2012, 2013). Unequal propensities for participating in education and sport are also especially related to social inequalities that are, to a large degree, acquired and reproduced outside of education and have their roots in childhood and family life and usually sustained throughout the life course (Evans and Davies 2010; Haycock and Smith 2014b; Quarmby and Dagkas 2010).

The Significance of Childhood and Youth

The promotion of Sport for All over the life course, but especially during the critical life stages of childhood and youth, is one longstanding justification of national (Department of Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] 2012; Department of Health, Physical Activity, Health Improvement and Protection [DHPAHIP] 2011; Sport England 2014a) and international (e.g. WHO 2010) policies intended to promote sport participation and physically active lifestyles. Of particular interest has been the

need to reduce the age-related drop-off in, and drop-out from, sport upon the completion of full-time education whilst retaining and increasing the small proportion of those who remain sports-active throughout their lives (Lunn et al. 2013; van Tuyckom and Scheerder 2010; Sport England 2014a). In England, the DCMS and Sport England have made 'a consistent increase in the proportion of people regularly playing sport' (DCMS 2012: 3) a key policy priority and identified 14–25-year-olds as a key target group in the promotion of weekly sport participation. This commitment has been made in light of the realization that despite over five decades of policy and financial investments made in sport by government and other agencies, the rates of sport participation in Britain have since the late-1980s remained relatively unchanged (Coalter 2013; Downward and Rascuite 2015; Rowe 2015; Sport England 2014a). More specifically, drawing on its *Active People Survey* (APS) data, Sport England (2014a: 3) have noted that although 'the number of 16–25s taking part has remained flat in recent years, the rate of participation ... has declined'. This, they argue, is associated with the fact that by age 25, 'almost all young people (90%) have left education', and that the transition 'out of education represents a cliff edge in terms of the tailored sport offer' (Sport England 2014a: 8) intended to enhance sport participation among young people.

Since leaving education (especially higher education) is considered to represent a 'cliff edge' after which well-known declines in sport participation occur, Sport England have focused on young people aged 14–25 in many of their efforts to promote Sport for All (DCMS 2012; Sport England 2014a). This is perhaps unsurprising for, as Roberts and Brodie (1992: 41) have noted, those who remain sports-active into adulthood and have undisrupted sport careers do so 'largely as a result of experiences in sport during childhood and youth'. The findings of Roberts and Brodie's (1992: 42) study also revealed that the main characteristic that distinguished adults' early sport socialization and continued participation 'was the number of different sports that they had played regularly and in which they became proficient during childhood and youth'. In other words, adults who engaged in one or more sports during every year from age 16 to 30 continued to play regularly up to at least age 35, and their entire sport careers were less vulnerable to disruption (Roberts and

Brodie 1992), because they had developed ‘wide sporting repertoires’ during childhood and youth which helped predispose them towards adulthood participation.

The findings of more recent studies in the UK (Haycock and Smith 2014b; Quarmby and Dagkas 2010, 2013) and elsewhere (e.g. Birchwood et al. 2008; Nielsen et al. 2012; Stuij 2015) have indicated that childhood, rather than youth, is the key life stage in which the foundations of inequalities in sport participation are first laid. The differences in participation that are generated in childhood have been shown to be related to the kinds of sporting habituses¹ and stocks of sporting (and other forms of) capital acquired during the differential experiences participants have of their childhood sport socialization. For those who remain sports-active during youth and into adulthood, childhood has been identified as a period during which they inherit strong sporting habituses and values from parents in particular. During primary socialization, parents have been shown to purposively invest their offspring with different resources and kinds of ‘ability’ that form the basis of predispositions towards childhood sport participation during leisure (Evans and Davies 2010; Nielsen et al. 2012; Pot et al. 2016; Stuij 2015). These experiences are often reinforced during secondary socialization with peers who become part of sporting networks in which sport participation is highly valued and normalized by the most active, and help generate long-lasting differences in sport participation that become relatively set by age 16 (Birchwood et al. 2008).

As our own research (Haycock and Smith 2014b) and that of others (e.g. Nielsen et al. 2012; Stuij 2015) has indicated, the most frequent participants’ childhood socialization are usually characterized by the presence of two sports-active parents who encourage them to participate in sport, often for enjoyment and the ‘love’ of sport, and who experience fewer financial and transport constraints than other parents. Although we cannot conclude that these features (nearly) always lead to higher levels of adulthood sport participation and are sufficient explanations of well-known changes (usually downwards) in sport participation post-childhood and across generations, without this kind of family background higher rates of adult sport participation are likely to be rare (Haycock and

Smith 2014b). Indeed, it might be argued that, as Birchwood et al. (2008: 291) have noted:

all the major, recognized differences in adult rates of sports participation between sociodemographic groups are generated during childhood, via cultures that are transmitted through families, and that post-childhood experiences play a relatively minor direct part in generating these differences.

Given the significance of family-based experiences of childhood socialization for developing predispositions towards adult sport participation, the present policy focus on raising sport participation among 14–25-year-olds by various sports organizations, including the DCMS (2012) and Sport England (2014a), would appear misguided and, perhaps, doomed to failure. In other words, policies intended to promote Sport for All and help raise the overall level and frequency of participation among the adult population may have limited success, for the effectiveness of this policy approach is likely to disproportionately benefit the minority of adults who benefited from the required kind of sports socialization in their childhood (Birchwood et al. 2008; Pot et al. 2016; Stuij 2015). The available evidence suggests that a more appropriate focal point for policy interventions concerned with boosting longer-term sport participation is, therefore, not with youth, but with children (Birchwood et al. 2008; Quarmby and Dagkas 2010, 2013; Stuij 2015). But policy makers' attempts to promote sport participation in all life stages also need to be considered in the light of several other uncomfortable truths, including the competition from other leisure activities for the share of people's time, money and attention (Roberts 2016) and the broader social contexts in which attempts to boost sport participation operate.

Sport for All, Leisure and Inequality

We noted earlier that although childhood and youth are the life stages in which sport participation is usually highest (often peaking around ages 12–14), they are also the periods when participation gradually drops off

and when some young people begin to drop out altogether. These age-related declines in sport participation are not necessarily evidence that people begin to turn their backs on sport, or become less interested in it as they get older (Roberts 2016). Rather, as people get older, sport becomes one among many other leisure activities that may prove to be more attractive and consistent with their unfolding, and increasingly individualized, lifestyles (Haycock and Smith 2014a, b; Roberts 2016). These activities, which are often done in the company of like-minded friends and supported by increased disposable income, may include the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, engagement in popular commercial leisure activities (e.g. eating out of the home, cinemas, shopping, music events), and sedentary leisure activities which include the use of social and other forms of media (Roberts 2016). Significantly, these peer-oriented activities are not always undertaken at the expense of sport: they can and often are accommodated within busy leisure lifestyles which feature sport participation, though not always at an intensity and frequency believed to benefit health. As Roberts (2016: 21) has noted:

Different sports compete for young people's loyalty, and all sports compete with other tastes and places that can act as sources of friends, identities and reputations. The choice is not between sport and idleness. Sport has to compete in a market-place of leisure activities, styles and identities.

The policy emphasis on Sport for All and the likely efficacy of strategies intended to promote sport participation over the life course must therefore take into account the appeal of other activities, relative to sport, within an already busy leisure market-place and the ways in which those activities are used to help participants reliably construct their adult identities and reputations (Roberts 2016).

As well as recognizing the competition posed by non-sporting uses of leisure, advocates of Sport for All policies and programmes face another particularly significant obstacle in seeking to boost sport participation throughout the life course: the widening of inequalities that contribute to the social differences in sport participation which are the target of those very policies. Of particular significance are widening wealth and income inequalities which have been described as 'the greatest social threat of our

times' (Dorling 2014: 1). In very unequal countries like the USA, Canada and the UK such inequalities are especially related to the tendency for the best-off 1 per cent to fuel (while justifying) rising disparities in income and wealth. Together with poverty, wealth and income inequalities 'have terrible effects on the health and wellbeing of the rest of society' (Dorling 2014: 24)—the so-called '99 per cent' which are becoming more equal with each other, but poorer relative to those who constitute the 1 per cent best-off in society (Dorling 2014; Pickett and Wilkinson 2015). In the UK, it has been estimated that in 2014, the richest 1000 people had more wealth than the poorest 40 per cent of households, and that the richest 100 people had over £100bn more wealth than the poorest 30 per cent of households (The Equality Trust 2014). The wealth of the 100 richest people also increased by £40.1 billion in the previous year (the equivalent of £109.95 million a day, or £1272 a second), and the richest 1 per cent of households are now said to have more wealth than over half of the population (The Equality Trust 2014).

The negative impact rising inequality has on health and wellbeing is well documented (see Pickett and Wilkinson 2015; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), with more unequal societies such as the UK having poorer mental and physical health, worse educational outcomes, higher rates of violent crime, and lower life expectancy than more equal ones.² In a recent review of studies examining income inequality in relation to health, Pickett and Wilkinson (2015: 323) concluded that the available evidence 'on income inequality and health points strongly to a causal connection', and that 'larger income differences increase social distances, accentuating social class or status differences'. They add that rather than being a new and independent determinant of health, income inequality is likely to act by:

... strengthening the many causal processes (known and unknown) through which social class imprints itself on people throughout life. This would suggest why, not only health, but a wide range of other outcomes with social gradients are also related to inequality. It also suggests that if class and status are to become a less powerful influence both on individual lives and on whole societies, it will be necessary to reduce the material differences which are so often constitutive of the cultural markers of social differentiation. (Pickett and Wilkinson 2015: 323–324)

Conclusion

Despite the ideological attraction of Sport for All as a goal of public policy, it remains something of an aspiration rather than a reality, especially when differences in rates and patterns of sport participation are considered. Indeed, in the context of increasing inequality and its corrosive effects on health and wellbeing, it would be implausible to suggest that the effectiveness of attempts to boost sport participation were somehow immune from these broader trends. Rather, as we noted earlier, it is likely that such inequalities precede participation and help shape the degree to which sporting predispositions formed during childhood generate unequal rates and patterns of adult sport participation. The significance of income (and wealth) inequalities suggests that ‘the achievement of substantially higher sports participation rates is well beyond the control of sports policy’ (Coalter 2013: 18) and that the simple promotion of Sport for All cannot reasonably be expected to tackle inequalities associated with income, poor work and housing conditions and vulnerability to unemployment (Pickett and Wilkinson 2015; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). As Rowe (2015: 43) has argued, ‘looking for simplicity in public policy responses to what are complex social, cultural, environmental and behavioural issues provides, at least in part, the explanation as to why it has invariably come up short in its big ambitions for community sport’, including in relation to the promotion of Sport for All. Until this is recognized, stubborn differences in present-day sport participation rates—that have their foundations in childhood and youth, but extend over the life course—are likely to remain intact, and the unequal lives people currently lead (particularly in neo-liberal economies) are likely to become even more unequal in the future.

Notes

1. Following Elias, habitus is referred here to a person’s ‘second nature’ or ‘embodied social learning’ which acts as an ‘automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control’ (Elias 2000: 368) that develops within the historically produced and reproduced relational networks of which they

are a part, and which stretches across generations. Each person develops their own individual and unique habitus as well as a series of social habituses—such as gender habituses—that are shared with others who have been habituated through similar experiences, with childhood and youth being the most impressionable phases during which habitus is formed (Elias 2000). This organization of psychological make-up into a habitus, Elias argued, is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout a person's life as the changing social relations in which people find themselves become more-or-less complex, and are perceived as more-or-less compelling.

2. Although there is not space here to examine the adequacy of the conclusions drawn by Wilkinson and Pickett, it is worth noting that these have not been without criticism, with several critics questioning their selection and interpretation of data which point to the links between income inequality, health and other problems with clear social gradients (e.g. Sanandaji et al. n.d.; Saunders 2010; Snowdon 2010). The authors have responded to these criticisms (Wilkinson and Pickett n.d.) and their subsequent work continues to be informed by the central thesis proposed in *The Spirit Level* (e.g. Pickett and Wilkinson 2015).

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11

Sport for All, or Fit for Two? Governing the (In)active Pregnancy

Shannon Jette

'Who says athletes can't be pregnant?' (*Ms magazine*, 1978).

The above quote appeared in the feminist magazine, *Ms.*, in 1978, and is indicative of a more permissive attitude toward physical activity in pregnancy that grew out of second-wave feminism. This attitude was quickly called into question, however, by members of the medical profession as well as pregnant women who were themselves concerned with harming their unborn child. The result was the emergence of the field of exercise and pregnancy science that aimed to measure and delineate the exact limits of safe exercise for pregnant women.

I share this anecdote in order to introduce my argument that, where the pregnant body is concerned, the Sport for All model is superseded by the imperative that women be 'fit for two.' That is to say, the appropriateness of the activities of the mother-to-be is, ultimately, judged according

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to the potential harms or benefits that they pose to her unborn child. In this regard, the advice, guidelines, and policies put into place concerning exercise in pregnancy can be viewed as part of a larger project of making citizens responsible in the name of health (and life) that took form in the eighteenth century and has continued since (Rose 2007; Rose and Miller 1992). As Foucault (1990) has demonstrated, during the eighteenth century, there was a shift in the way that power was exercised in Western societies: political power was no longer exercised by threat of death (at the hand of the sovereign) but rather, by fostering life and wellbeing of the population. This power over life (biopower) developed around two opposite yet complementary poles: the *disciplining* of the individual body through the working of various social institutions including the prison, school, and factory, and the *regulation* of the population through a range of techniques such as the collection of demographic information, life expectancy, birth and death rates that then informed population-level interventions. The pregnant body is an obvious site for the implementation of tools, techniques, and means intended to produce a healthy social body: by disciplining the individual pregnant body, the health of the (future) population is also regulated. While, historically, the pregnant body was subject to more direct forms of control through the medicalization and pathologization of pregnancy by (mostly male) physicians (see Arney 1982; Oakley 1984), in a contemporary Western society characterized by a neoliberal emphasis on personal responsibility for health, pregnant women are more likely to be produced as subjects who strive to manage pregnancy-related risks in order to *enhance* the health of their unborn child (Lupton 2012; Weir 2006).

In what follows, I explore the changing ideas about exercise in pregnancy by focusing on three different ‘moments’ or contexts that have shaped how the active, pregnant body has been understood: the rise of medicine and public health at the turn of the twentieth century; the emergence of second-wave feminism and the ensuing debates about active pregnant (sporting) bodies (1960s to early 1990s); and the so-called obesity epidemic (1990s to the present).¹ My approach is underpinned by the notion that scientific knowledge is neither neutral nor objective, but shaped by societal concerns and context. As such, it is instructive to explore trends in medical research—how research on a certain issue

skyrockets in relation to a perceived societal problem, requiring a range of solutions in the form of techniques, knowledge, policies, and practices that constitute an ensemble of power relations that Foucault (2003a, 2003b) termed ‘governmentality,’ and which are intended to regulate the population by providing guidance on how individuals should conduct themselves. According to Rose and Miller (1992), the workings of power or ‘governmentality’ may be analyzed in terms of *political rationalities* (the broad discursive frame of reference through which political problems and solutions are identified and considered) and in terms of the *technologies of government* (a consideration of the techniques, tools, and means through which practical policies are devised and inserted). It is through an analysis of the intricate inter-dependencies between political rationalities (e.g., liberalism, welfarism, neoliberalism) and governmental technologies that we can begin to understand the multiple and delicate networks (or the various technologies) that ‘connect the lives of individuals, groups and organizations to the aspirations of authorities’ (Rose and Miller 1992: 175–176). Thus, by exploring how medical advice about prenatal exercise has shifted over the years in relation to perceived societal problems, we can better understand the power relations at work.

Building a Healthy Nation State: From Late Nineteenth Century Medical Advice to the Rise of Prenatal Care

In the United States and Britain (including its colonies of Australia and Canada), women’s reproductive health became a special object of medical interest in the late nineteenth century, and a central role taken on by the ascendant (male) medical profession was the dissemination of advice to help young women grow into healthy wives who produced robust children and, in turn, nurtured a healthy nation (Arnup 1994; Lupton 1995; Oakley 1984). Feminist scholars have illustrated how this advice was informed by, and further perpetuated, notions of proper gender roles, and was used to justify the exclusion of women from higher education as well as the sporting realm (see Vertinsky 1994). Pregnant women, in particular, were the object of medical advice concerning appropriate exercise

practices, as upper and middle class women (the intended audience of the advice manuals) were thought to require a modicum of exercise in order to prepare for birth (Jette 2009; Vertinsky 1994). In medical texts and advice manuals published in the final years of the nineteenth century, pregnant women were cautioned by doctors to resist a sedentary or 'indolent' lifestyle of luxury (with excess of food and entertainment) and were encouraged to train for labor as it would lead to an easier birth (Jette 2009). The texts pointed to the quick and painless childbirth experiences of poor women, colored women, and indigenous women who were reportedly able to resume their occupation the following day with little pain or inconvenience. By living a less luxurious lifestyle, it was thought that birth could be made easier for middle and upper class women, suggesting that advice to train for childbirth was in large part meant to encourage these women to reproduce, and as such was part of a larger biopolitical project concerned with preventing race suicide (a perceived threat posed by high rates of immigration and lower birth rates within the white upper/middle classes) and preserving the vitality of the nation state.

While physical activity was encouraged, appropriate exercise for middle and upper class women included easy walking, simple calisthenics, or light housework—and was never to be taken to the extreme (Jette 2009). Pregnant women were warned of the dangers of prolonged standing or sitting (especially when bent over a writing table) and strongly cautioned to avoid stooping, lifting heavy weights, running, horse-riding, and dancing as these activities were thought to frequently induce a miscarriage. While walking was often promoted as an excellent form of exercise for pregnant women, allowing exposure to open air and sunshine, even this activity was viewed as potentially dangerous if overdone, especially during a woman's first pregnancy.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed significant changes in the care of the pregnant body as concerns about high rates of infant and maternal mortality provided the impetus for the widespread medicalization (and hospitalization) of childbirth and the advent of formalized and routine prenatal care for all women—working, middle, and upper class (Arney 1982; Jette 2009). With regard to exercise in pregnancy, medical advice changed slightly, as it was now recognized that some of the recipients of prenatal care were women who worked rigorously in their daily

lives (on farms, cleaning their houses and/or in factories), and that ‘additional’ exercise was unwise as well as often hard to obtain (Jette 2009). Thus, while walking continued to be viewed as the best way in which the expectant mother could keep herself in condition for birth, pregnant women (especially working women) were advised to rest in the hope that this would help to stem the high rates of infant and maternal mortality (Jette 2009). For example, in the popular Canadian magazine, *Chatelaine*, Dr. John W.S. McCullough explained that a woman ‘may continue to carry on her household duties, taking care that she does not unduly tire herself. Overwork, lifting of heavy weights or straining overhead work and over-reaching must be avoided’ (1933: 60). Women with time to engage in leisure activities continued to be advised to avoid running, sudden motions, lifting heavy weights, going up and down stairs quickly, horseback riding, cycling, motoring over rough roads, golf, tennis, dancing, and swimming (Jette 2009).

With the increased attention toward antenatal care and the pathologies of pregnancy in the early decades of the twentieth century, the notion that proper hygiene in pregnancy could prevent the ‘diseases’ of pregnancy was given increasing weight—and scientific authority. Prenatal advice was no longer intended only for upper class women but all women, and this was reflected in the emphasis on the importance of receiving sufficient rest during pregnancy. Despite these subtle changes, notions about the dangers of violent activities persisted, as did exercise prescriptions that reinforced the separate sphere ideology—although the rise of second-wave feminism would create the context in which to challenge these ideas.

Who Says Athletes Can’t Be Pregnant? Second-wave Feminism Meets Exercise Science (1960s–Early 1990s)

Medical advice about exercise during pregnancy remained much the same entering into the second half of the twentieth century (Jette 2009, 2011). However, in the newly developing field of sport medicine, physicians and trainers began to challenge long-held assumptions about the

abilities of the pregnant body. For instance, Dr. Michael Bruser, a Canadian physician from Winnipeg, wrote an editorial that appeared in the November 1968 edition of *Obstetrics and Gynecology* and which dissected many of the previous claims about physical activity in pregnancy. Bruser (1968) began his editorial by calling into question the vagueness of typical guidelines, observing that '[t]extbooks have little to say about the topic of sporting activities during pregnancy beyond stressing the need for caution and for common sense—yet there can be no precise definition of the phrase “common sense”' (p. 721). He also pointed to the illogic of texts suggesting that physical activity to any degree of violence is 'contraindicated' during pregnancy, yet in the next sentence cites a list of pregnant athletes who competed in the Olympic games—with no adverse effect on the progression of pregnancy or the fetus. Bruser further argued that it has generally been considered that a large number of conditions (such as abortion, premature labor, abruption placentae and others) may occur spontaneously without physical activity or stress being a major factor in their production, and 'unless and until it is proved that any of these conditions occurs as a result of physical activity, it would appear to be an exercise in timidity to disallow such physical activity through fear of such events' (p. 724).

Throughout the 1970s, there was a growing sense of permissiveness with regards to appropriate activities for pregnant women on several fronts—within the sports medicine literature, government health promotion texts, and the consumer culture industry as exemplified by fitness guru, Jane Fonda's book: *Jane Fonda's Pregnancy, Birth, and Recovery Program* (Jette 2009, 2011). In some instances, and as mentioned previously, the call to be physically active while pregnant was overtly linked to second-wave feminism such as was seen in the feminist magazine *Ms.*, which featured a story in 1978 entitled 'Who says athletes can't be pregnant?' followed by the subheading: 'You can—and should—swim, run, jog, row, exercise, cycle, skate and play tennis, squash, volleyball, soccer, softball, basketball, field hockey' (Kelly et al. 1978: 47).

The promotion of calisthenic and muscle toning exercises for pregnant women (with an emphasis on building abdominal/pelvic strength and flexibility to help to 'train' for birth) was not new, but the advocacy of more rigorous aerobic exercise—and sport—was, of course, antithetical

to the prescriptions provided to pregnant women by the medical profession for many years. This change encountered resistance as some health-care professionals as well as pregnant women wondered exactly how much was prudent—if any at all. These questions and concerns were met with a rapid increase in research on the topic in the 1980s, as exercise scientists and individuals in the health profession sought to more clearly define the limits of safety.² Within this newly emerging body of literature, methodological difficulties were identified as a central barrier to the study of exercise during pregnancy: ethical considerations prevented pregnant women from being tested under strenuous conditions such that the most reliable physiologic data during this first decade of research were derived from animal studies that were of limited applicability to humans, not to mention inconsistent in their results (see Jette 2009, 2011).

Significantly, the lack of conclusive evidence led to disagreements within the scientific community as a number of health practitioners (general medical practitioners, sport exercise physicians, exercise physiologists, nutritionists, and obstetricians) weighed in on how much was safe (Jette 2011). In May 1985, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists published a set of guidelines concerning exercise and pregnancy entitled ‘Exercise During Pregnancy and the Postnatal Period’ (ACOG 1985) that quickly became the subject of controversy. In an article featured in *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* almost a year following the release of the ACOG guidelines, assistant editor Michele Gauthier (1986) wrote that some exercise researchers, athletes, and physicians disagreed with the guidelines, complaining that they lacked input from other professionals beyond the eight-member ACOG committee; that the sweeping conclusions articulated in the guidelines were not based on existing data; that the guidelines were overly conservative in nature and failed to acknowledge individual differences in women’s fitness levels; and finally, that the ACOG may have unwittingly set a legal standard with the result that physicians lacking knowledge on exercise and pregnancy would closely adhere to the guidelines because of possible legal complications. The debate continued until the mid-1990s when, with a greater evidence base gathered after a decade of research, less conservative guidelines were issued (see ACOG 1994). It was generally agreed that exercise in pregnancy is, indeed, safe in moderate

amounts in a low risk pregnancy but that the upper limits are still unknown. Rigorous activity continues to be viewed with caution and concern (Jette 2011).

The mounting anxieties about the pregnant exerciser or athlete must (once again) be placed within the social context of the time. The growing participation of pregnant women in sports and fitness activities (both high level and recreational) was, as discussed above, tied to the emergence of second-wave feminism and challenged long-held notions about the physical capabilities of pregnant women and the social roles of women more generally. There was, then, something of a backlash to the idea that pregnant women were now running, playing tennis, and performing aerobics. But anxieties were also likely exacerbated by the reconfiguration of the pregnant body in the latter half of the twentieth century whereby the expectant woman was increasingly constructed as a risk to the fetus and responsible for controlling this risk to ensure a healthy pregnancy. For instance, the ‘reproductive revolution’—which began in the late 1960s with the approval of birth control and led to the abortion debates of the 1970s—repositioned reproduction as a ‘choice’ and the mother and fetus as separate entities, even adversaries (Wetterberg 2004). Adding to this, technological advances in fetal imaging and assessment (amniocentesis, ultrasonography and fetal monitoring) meant that the fetus could literally be seen, monitored, and tested and was more firmly established as a patient in its own right, with needs separate from (and often placed above) those of the mother (Lee and Jackson 2002). Also relevant to these increasing anxieties around the reproductive body (and women’s growing appetite for physical activity during pregnancy) was the emergence of epidemiological research linking women’s behaviors and lifestyle during pregnancy to congenital birth defects and other unfavorable birth outcomes (Weir 2006). Identified risk factors for birth defects included drug and alcohol use, exposure to environmental toxins, alcohol consumption, tobacco smoking—and exercise during pregnancy (Jette 2011).

Since this time, the onus of risk management has arguably become even greater for the pregnant woman (Lupton 2012), and this pressure has further intensified in light of recent research suggesting that various metabolic diseases (including diabetes and obesity) are being programmed in utero by women who are obese prior to pregnancy or gain too much

weight during pregnancy (McNaughton 2011; Warin et al. 2011). How concerns about maternal obesity have shaped ideas around exercise in pregnancy is the focus of the following section.

Programming Obesity or ‘Fit for Two’? Prenatal Exercise at the Intersection of the Obesity Epidemic and the Epigenetic Revolution

Every so often, social commentary emerges about the risk of excessive activity in pregnancy as seen, for example, when a CrossFit enthusiast posted pictures of herself lifting heavy weights at 8 months pregnant on Facebook (she received thousands of comments, both disparaging and supportive—see Wilson 2013), or when champion marathoner, Paula Radcliffe, continued training during pregnancy. Such discussions, however, are side stories to the larger discussion about physical activity in the context of maternal obesity. That is to say, the twenty-first century has brought with it yet another shift in dominant medical views of exercise in pregnancy: physical activity is viewed as a technique for women to avoid excess weight gain as well as decrease the risk of giving birth to a ‘too large’ baby that will develop chronic disease and obesity as it grows into adulthood (Jette and Rail 2013). The latter is informed, in large part, by increased attention to the concept of the Developmental Origins of Health and Disease (DOHaD) or fetal programming: the study of how early exposures in the womb (often linked to the behaviors of the pregnant woman and/or environmental exposures) can influence developmental pathways and induce permanent metabolic changes and, in effect, ‘program’ the fetus for future chronic disease (Warin et al. 2011). While the biologic mechanisms underlying the DOHaD are not well understood, researchers are increasingly interested in the potential role of epigenetic mechanisms whereby certain exposures in utero (as well as early life) can, in effect, turn the ‘volume’ of a gene up or down, altering the way it is expressed (i.e., phenotype) as opposed to changing the actual DNA (genotype) (Waterland and Michels 2007).

While much of the early DOHaD research focused on how exposure of pregnant women to inadequate nutrition and general conditions of poverty led to poor health outcomes in offspring (namely, low birth weight associated with hypertension, heart disease and type 2 diabetes), in the past decade (and in conjunction with panic that we are in the midst of an obesity epidemic) attention has shifted to an examination of how excessive maternal weight gain can program adult obesity and other metabolic diseases in the fetus (Jette and Rail 2013; McNaughton 2011; Warin et al. 2011). Thus, while the gene-environment interaction is crucial to fetal origins research, in much of the literature concerning pregnancy weight gain, there tends to be a very narrow (and decontextualized) view of the environment, whereby it is reduced to a woman's behaviors.

The first studies about obesity, pregnancy, and exercise appeared in the mid-1990s, but the focus was on how gaining too much weight during pregnancy would lead to excess postpartum weight and/or gestational diabetes mellitus.³ However, in the past five years, there has been a rapid increase in literature suggesting that inactivity in pregnancy contributes to fetal disease. Much of the research is epidemiological in nature—examining how/if exercise in pregnancy can control gestational weight gain to help the mother have a baby/child who is of 'normal' weight. There has also been a rise in research explaining women's understandings of exercise, as well as barriers to and facilitators of exercise in pregnancy so as to aid in the creation of exercise interventions. The past few years, in particular, have witnessed a proliferation of interventions with names such as 'Fit for Delivery' or IMPROVE (Improving Maternal & Progeny Obesity Via Exercise), which aim to use exercise as one strategy to limit women's weight gain to recommended levels.⁴ Race and class also emerge as an issue in this body of literature, but in a different way than previously, when upper class white women were directed to engage in gentle activity, so they might give birth more easily like women of color working in fields, or when working class women (during the rise of prenatal care) were advised to rest. The current literature suggests that women of color and women on low income are gaining too much weight (see Chasan-Taber et al. 2015; Lui et al. 2015; Shirazian et al. 2016), and there has been a growth in research exploring their ideas/perceptions of exercise in pregnancy, including barriers and facilitators, so that exercise interventions can be created (see Chang et al. 2008; Groth and Morrison-Beedy

2013; Kieffer et al. 2002; Krans and Chang 2012; Thornton et al. 2006). The goal is to prevent these pregnant women from giving birth to unhealthy children who are at risk of growing into unhealthy, overweight/obese adults that will be a strain upon the healthcare system.

Concluding Thoughts and Policy Implications

At the intersection of the obesity epidemic and a growing interest in epigenetics, all pregnant women are constructed as needing to control the environment of their womb to enhance the life of their offspring and prevent expensive, obese bodies. In this context, exercise in pregnancy is no longer simply about avoiding excessive exertion or sport to protect the baby from acute harm (e.g., miscarriage), or to make birth easier for upper class women in order to strengthen the nation state. Rather, it is positioned as a technique that can potentially improve the metabolism of a woman's unborn child and allow for optimal gene expression. It is a technique to help women to be 'fit for two' and actually enhance the life of her child.

My intent is not to suggest that physical activity in pregnancy does not provide potential benefits to mother and child. However, and following other feminist scholars (Guthman and Mansfield 2012; Yoshizawa 2012), I believe that the fetal environment must be located within the wider social, environmental, and political context given that many environmental stressors (e.g., pollutants that act as endocrine disruptors) are out of *all* women's control (see Guthman and Mansfield 2012). Moreover, not all women have the same opportunity, resources or 'choices' to focus upon *enhancing* the life of their child. Following this second point, there is a growing body of literature linking chronic stress (due to racism and/or poverty) to the creation of a toxic fetal environment that, through epigenetic mechanisms, leads to future disease (Thayer and Kuzawa 2011; Well 2010).

This leads me to suggest two considerations for the development of policy and/or guidelines concerning exercise in pregnancy. First, we must recognize that while exercise in pregnancy has the potential to both improve and harm the unborn child's health, a range of other important social and structural factors have been shown to have a significant impact

on the health of mother and child, and exercise in pregnancy is just a piece of the puzzle. Thus, ensuring policies are in place to provide all women with the conditions required to promote a healthy pregnancy (i.e., access to safe housing, adequate nutrition and reliable prenatal care) should take precedence. Second, if exercise in pregnancy is promoted, we should first ensure that women have the opportunity to engage in the movement of their choice, also recognizing that many women who might not engage in leisure exercise actually engage in movement in other ways such as paid and unpaid work. As I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter, exercise in pregnancy has long served a biopolitical function and my hope is that the political context of the time is considered prior to the creation of guidelines, policies, as well as informal advice that might prevent women from engaging in the activities that they wish to pursue or, alternatively, might push them to engage in activities in which they do not wish to participate.

Notes

1. The discussion that follows is based upon extensive searches of scientific databases (as well as key journals) in which I focused upon articles pertaining to physical activity during pregnancy, and attended to what was constructed as a problem as well as proposed solutions. For a more detailed description of the methods used to identify the literature discussed in the first two sections, see Jette (2009). Data for the final section is based on a more recent PubMed search (conducted November 2014) in which the keywords were: 'obesity,' 'pregnancy,' and either 'exercise' or 'physical activity'.
2. To illustrate this point, a PubMed search of the term 'exercise and pregnancy' yielded 8 studies from 1950–1969, 20 studies from between 1970–79, and 141 studies from 1980–90. See Jette (2009, p. 199).
3. A PubMed search using the keywords 'obesity,' 'pregnancy,' and either 'physical activity' or 'exercise' yielded 8 studies in the ten year period from 1996–2005, 26 in total over the next 4 years (2006–9), followed by 21 (2010), 22 (2011), 25 (2012), 30 (2013), and 43 (2014) with many of these referring to the potential of exercise to prevent the fetal programming of obesity in the paper rationale.
4. In 2014, for instance, 20 of 43 studies identified were intervention studies.

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12

The Role of Sport in the Lives of Mothers of Young Children

Katherine E. Soule

Introduction

This chapter serves to highlight the complexities of examining the role of sport in mothers' lives in contemporary Western cultures. Mothers, particularly those with children in infancy and early childhood, live at the intersection of competing discourses. The study of mothers' sport intersects the normative discourse on motherhood, which—in most Western cultures—tells women to selflessly devote themselves to their children, and the normative sport discourse, which values autonomy and independence. Sport scholarship, as well as popular media, have often been concerned with mothers' autonomous and non-obligated sport experiences and have positioned the family context, and children in particular, as constraining to women's sport participation (e.g. Cosh and Crabb 2012; Palmer and Leberman 2009). In contrast, a small body of research has shown that by considering the complexities of mothers' experiences, as

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well as the mothers' placement within these discourses, we can explore how maintaining greater openness when examining mothers' lives will allow us to break down the compartmentalization of mothers' sport experiences to better understand mothers' own meaning-making around the desirability of sport (or not) in their lives. In this chapter, I explore the possibility of examining mothers' participation in sport beyond the commonly accepted definition that 'sport' refers to participation in competitive physical activity.

Normative Discourse of Sport and Leisure

For most people in contemporary, Western culture, including sport and leisure scholars, central tenets of participation in sport and leisure emphasize freedom, personal satisfaction, independence, and autonomy. This is evident in the social psychological paradigm that frames most Western sport and leisure research. Framing participation as 'an experience or state of mind [that] is uniquely individual' (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987: 315) has contributed to the field's acceptance of the social psychological paradigm, which encourages practitioners and researchers to focus on constructing environments that lead to 'a predictably satisfying experience' (317). Since scholars operating within this paradigm are interested in explaining and improving individual's experiences within social contexts, researchers ask questions that focus on individuals' experiences of sport and leisure: benefits received, one's feelings and perceptions, results of treatments or experiments on the individual, motivations to participate, and other such components of an individual's participation (cf. Kleiber et al. 2011).

As these types of questions suggest, researchers are interested in knowing how 'people's personalities and the social situations that they encounter during their daily lives shape their perceptions, experiences, and responses' (Kleiber et al. 2011: xvi). In seeking this knowledge, researchers remain focused on the individual and are oriented toward research results that assist people in improving and increasing their positive sport and leisure experiences. Research findings that result from questions deemed important by this paradigm reinforce notions of autonomy, give

individuals the ability (and responsibility) to improve their participation and satisfaction, and provide measurable outcomes that are respected by our society at large.

Normative Discourse of Motherhood

While motherhood is complex and multifaceted, in contemporary mainstream Western cultures normative motherhood is generally portrayed as the gendered roles of a heterosexual couple raising children (cf. Chapman and Saltmarsh 2013). This normative discourse stems from wider cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. Commonly, mothers are thought to be responsible for children's basic daily caregiving routine. While these responsibilities change over time, it is often expected that mothers will manage the feeding, diapering/nappy changing, clothing, bathing, transporting, health, and education of their children. Fathers, on the other hand, are often assumed to be responsible for making money, which frequently requires substantial time away from their children (cf. Sunderland 2006). This normative distribution of childcare provision is given the status of a biological imperative, suggesting that it is more natural for mothers to want to care for their children than fathers and that mothers have an innate ability that fathers lack. From infancy, this normative discourse of motherhood takes root because the discourse is reinforced through media portrayals, religious teaching, literature, and governmental policy, as well as through social norms and training (cf. Goodwin and Huppertz 2010). If mothers make choices to put their own needs or interests first, it is likely that they will confront the construction of normative motherhood, feeling guilty and/or being judged by others for putting their own needs above their children (cf. Arendell 1999; Goodwin and Huppertz 2010).

Examinations of Mothers' Sport and Leisure

The above discussion on motherhood and the literature on sport and leisure highlights how mothers' sport exists at the intersection of competing discourses: the normative discourse of motherhood that expects

mothers' to sacrifice their own interests and needs for the benefits of their children, and the normative discourse of sport and leisure that emphasizes autonomy and personal satisfaction. The scholarship on mothers' participation in sport has been framed by the paradigms and assumptions that exist in leisure studies (cf. Palmer and Leberman 2009). Such scholarship validates beliefs that familial leisure is beneficial for individuals, promotes bonds between family members, and encourages an increased sense of familial unity (cf. Orthner and Mancini 1991). Consequentially, family has been viewed 'almost by consensus, as a positive leisure context for the individual' (Harrington 2001: 346).

However, early feminist scholars critiqued the concept of family leisure as a positive context. These researchers pointed out that for women, and more specifically mothers, familial obligations exceeded work commitments outside of the home (e.g. Bella 1992; Wearing and Wearing 1988). Since feminist scholars argued that family leisure as a positive context examines leisure experiences through a male-centered focus, one might expect that research on women's leisure would have broken away from the traditional leisure tenets in the examination of motherhood; however, that has not been the case. Research focusing on mothers' leisure often parallels the traditional tenets, describing leisure as those activities that enable autonomy and individualization. This body of scholarship has argued that mothers need opportunities to engage in individual and independent leisure experiences, and seems to value autonomous sport and leisure activities over shared, familial experiences (e.g. Bialeschki and Michener 1994; Currie 2004; Larson et al. 1997; Miller and Brown 2005; Shannon and Shaw 2008; Trussell and Shaw 2007; Wearing 1990).

In examining mothers' sport and leisure, researchers conclude that mothers are limited and constrained by the presence of and obligation to care for their children. For example, Palmer and Leberman discussed how women stop participating in sport because of motherhood and that 'in most countries, pregnancy and childbirth historically have implied the end of professional sport involvement for women' (2009: 243). Shaw iterated the commonly accepted belief that mothers of young children are the most 'disadvantaged' group for autonomous participation (1999: 273). Likewise, in their examination of parental self-regulation as related to physical activity, Butson et al. found that mothers limited the time

they spend on physical activity, ‘driven by an ethic of care’ for their children (2012: 1137). These findings exemplify the assertion that children, especially young children, constrain mothers’ participation in sport. Beyond the literature, divides between motherhood and sport and leisure participation are reified by media, cultural norms, and engrained social messaging that align pregnancy with the end of women’s participation in sport (cf. Cosh and Crabb 2012; McGannon et al. 2012; Leberman and Palmer 2009).

Expanding Conceptualizations of Mothers’ Experiences

Despite the meaning that mothers may place on activities such as playing an informal ball game with their children or taking their babies to ‘mommy and me’ yoga, researchers have traditionally excluded familial activities from ‘true’ sport or leisure participation (such as playing a game of soccer in an adult league) because they entail responsibility for one’s child(ren). In their review of the literature, Craig and Mullan determined that a family’s shared experiences ‘cannot be defined as true leisure for the parent, but as part of childcare’ (2012: 213). This quote exemplifies how existing scholarship has framed parental care as work and, consequentially, as divergent from ‘true’ sport and leisure participation. Moving outside of the social psychological paradigm, we can consider alternative ways to approach studying mothers’ sport and leisure from mothers’ own perspectives to expand our ability to better understand the role of sport in the lives of mothers, particularly mothers of young children.

Experiences of Elite Sport Mothers

Academic interest in mothers’ sport participation is extremely limited and the few publications that exist focus on mothers who are privileged by their success in elite sports (Hodler and Lucas-Carr 2015; Leberman and Palmer 2011; Metz 2008; Pedersen 2001). While such pieces contribute to our understanding of mothers’ experiences and meaning-making,

the interests and successes of elite sport mothers cannot be extended to most mothers. Elite sport mothers have access to sport resources (trainers, physical therapists, equipment, facilities, etc.) that are not commonly accessed by all and often have the financial means for a highly supported family environment (nannies, housekeeping, chefs, etc.) that most mothers cannot afford. However, as discussed below, the few studies that suspend the social psychological paradigm to examine the experiences of mothers who are elite athletes do provide some greater insight into the challenges that mothers face when making elite sport a life priority.

In the first examination of mothers who were also elite athletes, Pedersen sought to investigate what—at that time—seemed like a ‘phenomenon [that] was not quite intelligible’ (2001: 260), namely the existence of elite sportswomen who were also mothers. Although describing these women as ‘deviations that are not readily explained,’ Pedersen (261) sought to create space for, and understanding of, motherhood in elite athletics through eight in-depth interviews with elite Danish athletes, who were also mothers. Little description is provided about the methods, but Pedersen clearly brought an inquisitiveness and openness to the research, acknowledging that ‘It certainly cannot be stated that the careers of elite sports mothers have originated from social traditions’ (269). Instead, Pedersen described each of these mothers as a ‘self-made expert’ who developed ‘mediating link[s] between such macro-aspects as sport as a social institution in a specific historical period, and micro-aspects ground in everyday activities in different life spheres’ (270). By seeking to explore what seemed impossible, Pedersen came to recognize these women’s navigation of the divergent, yet interlaced, social contexts in which they lived their lives.

Leberman and Palmer interviewed nine mothers in New Zealand, who also held leadership position in elite sports, including athletes, coaches, and managers. Utilizing a flexible interview script and qualitative analysis, the researchers sought to understand how these women negotiated the multiple roles in their lives as mothers and elite sport leaders. In their discussion, the researchers highlighted the ‘interconnectedness of [participants’] social lives in the context of family and sport,’ as well as the complexity of the women’s lives (2009: 326). Rather than reinforcing ‘the dialectic between work and family’ (327) existing in most other literature,

these researchers examined how the women negotiated their lives, and potential constraints, to incorporate sport and leisure into their daily lives by 'actively seeking out social settings that were flexible in creating work-leisure-family balance' (327). However, the researchers also described the guilt, demands, and exhaustion these mothers experienced:

Separating, neutralizing, and reframing strategies, strong support networks, and ongoing encouragement and advice from male and female role models and mentors, enabled these mothers to remain leaders in sport. These constraints were associated with feelings of guilt, stress, and exhaustion, a lack of flexibility in organizational practices and resource allocation regarding the presence of children and childcare, as well as underlying social disapproval from the wider community when women were perceived to be neglecting their caring and nurturing roles or challenging the invisibility of children in some work and leisure settings. (328)

Such depictions of mothers, who are elite athletes, highlight the complexity of balancing elite sport participation with motherhood. By intentionally seeking to examine mothers' negotiations between their careers and motherhood, sport researchers found that the interconnect-edness of the mothers' experiences both enabled and constrained their participation in elite sport, as well as their professional careers and familial lives.

A few contributions to the sport literature focus on the experiences of an individual mother who is also an elite athlete. These contributions explore a woman's participation in depth, pulling together the multifaceted contexts that contribute to their success in overcoming the cultural norms that portray motherhood as the end of sport participation. Hodler and Lucas-Carr (2015) examined media portrayals of Dara Torres' 'come-back' to professional swimming after having a baby, winning three silver medals in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Their critical analysis highlighted how media flattened the complexity of Torres' experiences to tell a story of autonomous success, which 'erases social inequalities' (14). They emphasized the complexity and interdependent nature of her lifestyle, which afforded her opportunities that are atypical for most mothers who are interested in sport and fitness. In a reflexive auto-ethnography, Metz

(2008) considered how Jackie Moore, a Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) player, navigated the cultural contexts and discourses impacting her life to achieve success as a professional athlete, mother, and academic. Reflecting on Jackie's experiences, Metz mused how 'caught in a league that celebrates motherhood but does not uniformly support it as an organization, one finds a complex negotiation of the tripartite of race, class, and gender.... The mothers of the WNBA bodies become representations, condensations of cultural stereotypes, the athletes' own perspectives and the cultural perspective' (274). In both examples, the researchers described the complex social, economic, and cultural contexts that enable these mothers to succeed as elite sport athletes.

Connections Between Leisure Literature and Mothers' Experiences of Sport

Moving away from elite athletes, there is an even greater dearth of research on mothers' participation in sport. Leberman and LaVoi lamented that 'mothers' voices are generally absent' (2011: 474) from our literature and in the following years, mothers' voices in the sports literature have remained virtually silent. Searching the sport literature for 'mother,' most results point to the role mothers have in facilitating others' sports participation. As Thompson explained: 'The relationship of adult women to sport, if they have one at all, is far more likely to be through their associations with others who play, such as their husbands' (1999: 2). Yet, we all know mothers do participate in sport, whether it be on recreational teams or through informal hiking groups or in family sport played at the local park. Palmer and Leberman described how 'academic work on women and sport has been rooted in leisure and cultural studies...where women's limited access to, and engagement in, leisure highlighted the gendered nature of leisure and associated spheres, such as sport and recreation' (2009: 241). Building off this foundation, leisure research that has explored mothers' experiences outside of the social psychological paradigm could inform preliminary understanding of mothers' experiences of sport.

A small body of research that explored mothers' leisure (beyond sport) enabled study participants to explain how leisure is meaningful in their lives. In one study, Freeman, Palmer, and Baker examined the leisure of women who were stay-at-home mothers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Based on prior research findings, the researchers anticipated that study participants 'would not feel entitled to leisure or make it a priority in their lives' (2006: 209). Unexpectedly, the participants valued, prioritized, and felt entitled to these experiences; however, this time was not always autonomous, personal leisure. Instead, the women indicated that 'being a mother and spending time with their families' was what they enjoyed most in life (212). Rather than reframing these women's experiences, the researchers shared their conviction to 'trust that our participants are telling the truth and are the experts regarding their life experiences...[W]e did not feel it would be appropriate to impose a sense of oppression on these women when they did not describe such feelings' (215). Ultimately, the participants' experiences of 'development, self-determination, and self-expression...led [the researchers] to question assumptions that quality of life may be measured by the amount of unconstrained leisure time a person has available' (218). When the participants' experiences contradicted the researchers' understandings, rather than patronizing their study participants, the researchers stretched their own understandings of mothers' experiences.

In another study, Tirone and Shaw utilized a qualitative research approach to 'explore all aspects of life that [Indo Canadian] women found to provide a sense of satisfaction, fulfillment, enjoyment and relaxation' (1997: 227). While the researchers cited the traditional leisure tenets in this article, they were willing to suspend them for this population of mothers, who were not participating in a normative North American lifestyle. They concluded that people who have 'different life experiences' may not accept Western views of leisure and that 'further research will help [leisure scholars] to better understand marginalized groups and how they conceptualize the notion of leisure in their lives' (243). Similarly, the participants in the Tirone and Shaw study 'spoke of their families as being central to their lives...[F]amily members were considered to be of utmost importance to all participants' (1997: 232). Further, these women 'placed little or no emphasis on their own personal interests' (234). Additionally,

the researchers reported that the study participants 'were offended by some of the values held by North American women toward private time and time away from children, husbands and extended family' (241). Since the researchers were willing to acknowledge and interrupt their preconceived assumptions and beliefs about mothers' leisure, they were able to see leisure experiences that exist outside of autonomous, non-obligated time.

Building from the findings that these mothers placed great personal significance on their shared experiences with their families and children, my own research examined mothers' meaning-making while engaging in an attachment parenting practice (Soule 2013). Mothers who practice attachment parenting emphasize developing relationships with their children in a way that goes beyond a sense of obligation and care: their desire to deeply connect with their children surmounted their other interests. For this study, I conducted multiple phenomenological interviews with four mothers, in their homes, over six months. The participants explained that even when presented with an opportunity to socialize without their children or to simply have some time alone, they preferred to be with their children. One participant recounted:

My mom was here the other night, she was like 'Go out ... Leave the baby here with me. I will give him a bottle.' And it's just like, 'Mama you are trying to de-stress me but you are actually increasing my stress.' ... It's actually more fun for me if I have an activity where I am watching my kids have fun, and I am having fun too. I don't particularly like doing things on my own, I actually prefer being around the kids. (Soule 2013: 90)

For the mothers in this study, meaning-making occurred through relational experiences with their children, which they said provided opportunities for growth, self-fulfillment, self-awareness, and joy.

The women asserted that their own independence had become less meaningful and less important since having children; however, they did make space for themselves and their interests within their family environments. For example, two of the mothers developed routines where they included their children in their personal physical activity by jogging while they pushed their children in their strollers. These mothers talked about

how incorporating their children into their sport impacted their focus; for example, there were increased interruptions to stop and pick up something a child dropped. While the women were clear that raising children in this way is not always easy and there are moments of doubt and frustration, they recognized their decision to be with their children as a day-to-day choice that they value. As one mother described:

People always talk about ‘You need a playroom. You need a playroom.’ I don’t want a playroom. I want our living room to be the playroom. I want to be able to play wherever we are because I feel like he is part of our family. (Soule 2013: 97)

For these mothers, sport and physical activity were another opportunity to connect and engage with their children within a healthy lifestyle.

In all of these studies on mothers’ experiences, researchers suspended conceptualizations of leisure as autonomous, non-obligated activity in order to make sense of the mothers’ own meaning-making. A similar application of suspending the social psychological paradigm may provide insight into how mothers participate in sport as it occurs within interconnected, relational contexts, and help practitioners when designing sport and physical activity for mothers of young children.

Exploring Family Activity Programming

Traditionally, it is assumed in physical activity programming that parental physical activity should be autonomous and that children are a constraint to participating in ‘true’ physical activity or sport. In my review of the literature, I was struck by how blatantly programming recommendations tend to emphasize the challenges of motherhood while overlooking the rewards of relational physical activities. For example, in a recent textbook, Yoder and Martinez stated:

[K]nowing the demands and limitations placed on single mothers...professionals must offer programs that allow them the opportunity to participate. Perhaps that means that some fitness programs take place in the

middle of the morning and the agency offers a toddler play period at the same time. Given the fact that money is in short supply for this population, the agency must also subsidize the program so that the mothers do not have to choose between their own physical fitness and paying the utility bills. (2013: 76)

Focusing on children as a constraint to mothers' physical activity participation, the authors claim that childcare would afford mothers opportunities for participation and there is an implicit assumption that mothers' sport participation should be autonomous and independent from their children. Such assumptions—stemming from central sport and leisure tenets—entirely miss the meanings expressed by the mothers in the studies discussed above. As an example, one of my study participants (Soule 2013) reflected on how she felt about life and parenting since separating from her husband:

I worked yesterday and I was sad... I just felt like I needed to cry...I was just feeling cracked...We have work, we have family, we have leisure... everything has its own box. I wish that it would more connected. (169)

As a single mother, this participant would not likely appreciate a fitness class and separate childcare. Rather than more compartmentalization in her life, she yearns for greater connectivity between physical activity and family. Yoder and Martinez's (2013) recommendation echoes the advice of prior best practices for sport and leisure practitioners, which has likely shaped sport programming at many recreational sites. I wondered: How many mothers would appreciate program offerings that provide low- to no-cost opportunities to spend time with their children while engaging in sport and physical activities?

Testing these ideas, a colleague and I at the University of California began offering free family physical activity days at local school and community sites during summer vacation (Klisch and Soule 2015). More than 400 community members participated in these family physical activity days in the first year, which were led by a variety of community-serving agencies. Participating families rotated through activity stations, learning games and exercises they could do together for free in their yards

or at public parks. While the events were open to all community members, all of the adult participants were women who brought children with them. Through informal qualitative interviews, two meaningful themes about participation in these events were developed (Klisch and Soule 2015). First, participating families have high levels of desire to engage in community-sponsored family physical activity events, particularly in the summer months when the family members are all home together during the day. Second, participating family members (youth and parents) saw these family activity days as opportunities to bond with their family members in a fun way in order to achieve positive health outcomes. Building from these experiences, community agencies (such as local public health departments, city recreational centers, and participating school communities) continued to offer these summer family physical activity days and family participation continued to grow at each event.

Though scholarship and popular culture assert that mothers' sport participation ends with pregnancy, our own knowledge of mothers' engagement in sport belies these assertions. So, how do mothers experience sport? What are their own meanings around the value of sport in their lives? Although very small, both the body of scholarship on elite sport mothers and mothers' relational leisure experiences point to the complexity of mothers' lives and experiences, which, in contemporary Western cultures, exist at the intersection of competing discourses. To holistically explore the role of sport in the lives of mothers, there is a clear need to break down the compartmentalization that exists around the concepts of *motherhood* and *mothers' sport*. By allowing mothers' voices and experiences to inform our scholarship, we can begin to understand mothers' own meaning-making around the desirability (or not) of sport in their lives.

Conclusion

Traditional conceptualizations of sport present challenges for understanding mothers' experiences because many mothers have little opportunity for autonomous, non-obligated time to participate in sport since many are responsible for the care and upbringing of children. Feminist

scholars have pointed to the need for new definitions and research that can encapsulate mothers' experiences. Nonetheless, sport scholarship has continued to reify traditional tenets and positioned children as a constraint to mothers' participation in sport. Yet a smaller body of scholarship, which has examined mothers' experiences of elite sport and leisure outside of the social psychological paradigm, points to the existence of mothers' complex and interconnected sport and leisure experiences. While these studies have examined the experiences of mothers who identify with subcultural groups (e.g. elite athletes, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, participating in attachment parenting), the findings have wide implications for the examination of all mothering experiences. The experiences of the women who participated in these studies suggest that the socio-psychological paradigm that has framed scholarship on mothers' sport participation may be too limited and not able to clearly describe mothers' meaning-making. Since mothers' lives often cannot be easily divided into siloes for mothering, professional, and sport activities, researchers need to explore into the places of overlap, interwoven meaning, and intersecting discourses that shape mothers' experiences of sport.

At the same time, the greater body of scholarship supplies countless quotes from mothers who desire greater autonomy in their lives and more time for individual leisure pursuits, including participation in sport. Considering these findings about mothers' sport participation, across our scholarship, may help us to recognize that while mothers are individuals who have agency in their lives, it is also important to realize that mothers' sport participation is not simply a reflection of an individual. Rather, mothers' experiences of sport reflect the interconnectedness of the social-cultural contexts present in the contemporary cultures in which they live. Understanding sport as situated within cultural contexts imbued with many layers of meaning (e.g. gendered, economic, racial)—rather than simply a reflection on an individuals' autonomous agency to participate in organized or unorganized physical activity—may provide the necessary space to allow us to break down the compartmentalization of mothers' experiences and more fully understand mothers' meaning-making around the role of sport in their own lives.

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13

The Gay Games, Safe Spaces and the Promotion of Sport for All?

Chelsea Litchfield and Jaquelyn Osborne

Introduction

To begin, this chapter examines the rhetoric and reality of the Gay Games in terms of offering an experience of sport which encompasses notions of discrimination-free participation and inclusivity for all. We chart the historical development of the Gay Games and the founding and current tenets on which they are based. An analysis of the experiences of a sample of women hockey and soccer players in the Gay Games provides a springboard for examining not only the positive social effect of participation but also the socio-economic and cultural barriers that prevent the Gay Games from fully realising inclusivity and participation for all. Therefore, this chapter provides an analysis and critique of the simultaneous existence of inclusion and exclusion at the Gay Games sporting event.

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Homophobia and the Creation of the Gay Games

Homophobia can occur in many different situations in sport. Women who participate in sport, particularly team sports, have traditionally encountered stigmatisation or labelling, such as being called a 'tomboy' or 'mannish', 'butch', 'dyke', or 'lesbian', because their sporting participation has historically been deemed gender inappropriate (Hargreaves 1994, 2000: 135; Sartore and Cunningham 2009; Lenskyj 2003; Peper 1994). In an effort to protect themselves from the consequences of homophobia and the lesbian label in sport, many lesbian athletes have remained hidden, dropped out of sport, created new/alternative/non-mainstream teams and competitions, or have become more politically active within existing sporting organisations. The International Gay Games was developed in part to address this situation and as a result, the Gay Games are an example of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) individuals attempting to create a positive and affirming sporting environment for themselves.

The International Gay Games is a multi-sport, mass participation event held every four years. The Gay Games is traditionally 'recognised as the premier athletic event that is supportive of lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and trans-gendered (LGBT) individuals' (Krane et al. 2002: 27).¹ The idea of creating the Games was conceived in 1980 in the United States by Mark Brown and Dr. Tom Waddell. Mark Brown was the sports editor of the *Bay Area Reporter* (a gay-identified newspaper) and Waddell was a decathlon representative for the United States at the 1968 Olympics (Symons 2010). The first Gay Games were held in San Francisco in 1982 and since then, the Gay Games have been held every four years. The next Gay Games is scheduled to be held in Paris, France, in 2018 (Federation of Gay Games 2017).

In her seminal work on the Gay Games, Symons (2010) observed that inclusion was an important vision for the first Games, and this inclusion had to 'encompass the diverse gay and lesbian population in the policies and practices of the Games' (2010: 125).² Policy and practices surrounding the Gay Games provide the opportunity for the Games to be inclusive

of all participants, not least from the perspectives of gender and sexuality. According to Symons (2010), the Gay Games has also been instrumental in the formation of 'community' that is both simultaneously inclusive and exclusive for those involved. Waddell explained why community is important to the vision of the Games:

The Gay Games are not separatist, they are not exclusive, they are not oriented to victory, and they are not for commercial gain. They are, however, intended to bring a global community together in friendship, to experience participation, to elevate consciousness and self-esteem and to achieve a form of cultural and intellectual synergy. (Waddell 1982)

Shortly after, Waddell's vision of a non-separatist, participation-grounded Games came to fruition; however, over time, the Games have become increasingly commodified despite their inclusive roots and therefore, not available to all who wish to participate.

Symons (2002) suggested that the 'social elements that sustain communities such as shared meaning, solidarity, belonging, participation, and even equality, are fostered at the Gay Games' (111). Symons (2002) further suggested that community is avowed during events such as the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games (111). While LGBT participants originate from different countries, backgrounds and cultures to compete, the Gay Games has become a place where participants can be uninhibited in a sporting and social setting. In fact, the Games contest the 'heterosexual hegemony of sport' (Symons 2006: 149).

Central to the philosophy of the Gay Games is the participation of all (including all abilities, all fitness levels and all sexual orientations) in the sporting events. Therefore, athletes may range from novice to elite. While the Gay Games have provided a stage for competition for elite athletes and teams,³ the Games are predominately focused on a participatory culture and doing one's best within a like-minded community. However, it would be naïve to classify all participants of the Gay Games as 'one community.' Symons (2002) suggests that the 'lesbian and gay community' of the Gay Games includes 'lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered, drag queens, leather dykes and daddys, and queers from many different racial, ethnic and national backgrounds' (101). This 'community' is not

one homogenous population, it consists of several communities participating each with their own identities and agendas. Symons proposes that there is 'no one Gay Games' that reflects one single community, there 'is a multiplicity of Gay Games lived by the various participating individuals, groups and communities' (2002: 111). Therefore, there are various sub-cultures present at the Games, which is not dissimilar to a variety of groups that have been identified at other major sporting events (see Dionigi and Litchfield, Chap. 13 in this book).

Symons further suggested that the 'diverse communities participating in the Gay Games, and their different interests and political perspectives especially concerning the organisation and engagement with sport and leisure, tensions and conflicts are endemic and ongoing' (2006: 156). Conflicts within such diverse communities are not unusual, as all of these groups struggle for power in the wider LGBT community. For instance, one such tension is that 'lesbians with separatist feminist politics and belief systems can find it difficult to align themselves [with this wider LGBT community] considering their political analysis of patriarchal power' (Symons 2002: 101; also see Jeffreys 1993).

There are also several other tensions and conflicts apparent at the Games, including a focus on the 'body' (particularly for young gay males) and transgendered participation at the Games. In fact, Symons (2002) suggest that there are 'significant differences in economic and social power, as well as gendered cultural perspectives amongst gays and lesbians, differences that can often become political and divisive' (102). Economic conditions and capitalism have been linked to the 'commodification of the body and sexuality, mass media and niche marketing' (Symons 2002: 102). This has been particularly the case for many young gay males who have claimed a distinct sexual identity and placed importance on image, fashion and leisure (see Symons 2002, 2010). Symons explains that while the affluent lesbian lifestyle exists, such a culture is not so obvious in most lifestyles, media and marketing for lesbian identified women (2002; 101).

A further tension that exists in the LGBT community at the Games is the inclusion of transgender participation at the Games. While the culture of transgender participation is widely supported, Symons (2002)

suggests that there are conflicts with some lesbian feminists. Symons explains that 'Lesbian feminists advocating the celebration of womanhood and the centrality of patriarchy to women's oppression have been opposed to the inclusion of women not born 'womyn' in their communal activities' (2002: 102–103). Therefore, tensions can arise when transgendered identified women enter the fray of lesbian feminists and their access and participation at the Games.

It is hardly surprising that tensions exist between members of a number of minority groups. There are a number of political and power struggles between communities within the LGBT population, due to both the shared and separate political and cultural struggles that each group faces. Davidson (2013) suggests that 'the cleaving of solidarity alliances between lesbian and gay communities and other types of social justice struggles is a dangerous enterprise' (75). That is not to say that there is no solidarity at the Games. In fact, the Games' organisers have attempted to proliferate the solidarity that does exist between communities (through policy).

Symons (2006) further explained that to encompass diversity and address cultural tensions at the Gay Games, the Gay Games organisers have implemented 'progressive and inclusive policies and practices to promote this diverse participation in sport' (156). Such policies formulated and adopted by the Gay Games encompass all aspects of the LGBT community. For example, such policies had to ensure that transgendered people, intersex people and people living with HIV and AIDS were included (as they were all part of the combined communities) (see Symons 2010). Additionally, the Games in Amsterdam in 1998 were particularly proactive in changing the gender equity culture at the Games with the implementation of a number of policies. The organising committee of the Amsterdam Games implemented four policy areas to increase female involvement at the Games, including the following:

1. Affirmative Action principles were used in the selection processes of all paid staff members;
2. An extensive and targeted promotions campaign ... which meant that all promotional material for these Games ... contained images of women and men;

3. A number of specific measures designed to increase the registration of women in the sports programme and to take account of women's generally lower income levels and greater family commitments ... was implemented, and;
4. A strategy to achieve gender equity within Gay Games V was the creation of a specific women's programme as well as a balance of women's and men's interests and participation opportunities within the sport, cultural, social issues and events and festivities programmes (Symons 2010: 167–168).

The testimony of participants of the Gay Games should reflect these policies and practices to some extent and reveal feelings of safety, community and inclusivity. However, simultaneously, the Games are inevitably exclusive, especially in terms of culture and class, as argued in this chapter.

The following section examines the experiences of eight female lesbian-identified (aged 22–52 years with an average age of 39 years) participants at the 2002 Gay Games held in Sydney, Australia. At the time of their interviews (2006), these women were all working in some form of professional employment (including lawyer, academic and nurse), thus these women had steady incomes and independence. As such, this group of women were financially independent and able to travel to events such as the Gay Games. Given this event was held 15 years ago, we reflect on both the experiences of participants at the Games, but also how the Gay Games have evolved since these interviews took place and comment on the increased commercialisation and cost and difficulties in accessibility, as well as the cultural politics of this event.

The Experiences of Gay Games Participants

The experiences of eight women who have attended the Gay Games are explored in relation to inclusion at the Games. The participants were interviewed in 2006 as part of a larger doctoral study completed in 2012 (see Litchfield 2012). These women were recruited from the women-only Northern Central Hockey Club (NCHC) and the mixed gendered Melbourne Central Hockey Club (MCHC).⁴ All of these women had participated in at least one Gay Games in either field hockey or soccer.

Additionally, all of the women had participated in the Gay Games in 2002 in Sydney (Australia). Participating at the Gay Games resulted in several positive outcomes for the participants, but the two most relevant to inclusivity are personal empowerment and forming new social connections.

Experiencing a Sense of Personal Empowerment

A number of participants explained that they felt personally empowered when participating at the Gay Games. This empowerment was achieved through feelings of self-worth, safety and freedom. Dawn (49 years) described her experiences of participating at the Sydney Gay Games as one of the ‘highlights of her life’. Claire (40 years) also felt that the Gay Games provided a ‘fantastic experience [to be yourself]’. Summer (36 years) also explained that she was empowered by participating at the Gay Games: ‘I mean I think it’s great because you can get out and be who you are and act, behave with your partner or your supporters without feeling intimidated and so I think that that’s a positive thing...’. Symons (2002) found that the ‘social elements that sustain communities such as shared meanings, solidarity, belonging, participation, and even equality, are fostered at the Gay Games’ (111). Therefore, these positive experiences of the participants are supported by the extensive research into the history of the Gay Games by Symons.

Karen (42 years) described her experiences of the Sydney Gay Games in 2002:

It was just fantastic... it was just, you felt a sense of freedom in a way... Just the opening ceremony, and the thousands of people, you were just there for the same reason, and look, whether there were straight people there as well participating, they were there because they embraced the people they were with. It was really quite a wonderful feeling.

Karen elaborated on this point and suggested that she would not normally feel the same freedom as a lesbian-identified woman, outside of the Gay Games experience. The Gay Games provided a different type of ‘freedom’ for Karen. This freedom mentioned by Karen allowed her to

express her sexuality in a public space and, in the context of the Gay Games, such expression was deemed 'safe'. A number of studies have also described such sporting environments as 'safe' and affirming spaces for women (see Griffin 1998; Hillier 2005: 62; Litchfield 2011; and Shire et al. 2000: 53).

Cassandra (52 years) also raised the concept of a 'safe space' when referring to the Gay Games. Claire (40 years) felt that the Gay Games were 'a celebration and again it's a safe space'. In her study on an Australian Rules women's football team, Hillier describes a 'safe space' as a site for 'young women to test gender and sexuality boundaries in relative safety' (2005: 5). Litchfield (2011) also observed this 'safe space' and culture in one of the women's field hockey teams in Melbourne. This culture provided a (perceived or actual) space to experience personal empowerment for the participants in the current study, regardless of sexuality, age and ability. However, it is worth acknowledging that there is still overt opposition to Games which affects the 'safe space'. Davidson (1996) explains that fundamentalist Christian organisations have protested to have the Games banned and vandals have 'spray painted homophobic graffiti on registration walls' (77). Despite this, this small group of participants felt that safety was present at the Games during their participation.

Forming New Social Connections

A number of these women had formed new social connections and friendships at the Gay Games. Connie (32 years) and Summer (36 years) explained that they made a number of new friends and social connections at the Games. Summer (36 years) explains that 'I met a whole lot of people that I hadn't met before'. Dawn (49 years) explained that the Games were 'a great opportunity just to get together and play together and, and have fun together'. In particular, Dawn (49 years) explained that 'meeting each other really bleary eyed at 7.30 in the mornings'; 'hanging about afterwards and warming down'; 'having a spa together'; and 'winning the silver medal in the grand final' provided a space for her to make different social connections with existing and new team-mates.

Connie (32 years) felt that the social connections made at the Gay Games were the most important part of the Games for her. In fact, after making friends at the 2002 Gay Games, Connie moved from the Netherlands to Australia and decided to play hockey with the same group of women in Melbourne. She explained:

I met some friends during the Gay Games and one of them said “well why don’t you come and join the club at *NCHC* and play hockey here as well?” ... so when I arrived here, basically I started to play hockey before I even joined I think. I played two or three weeks after I arrived in... Melbourne. It’s a good way to meet people. (Connie, 32 years)

Connie has since found a female partner through the Gay Games. According to Hargreaves (2000), many lesbians participate in sporting cultures where they can meet and socialise with other same-sex attracted women (152; also see Griffin 1998). As a result, lesbian sporting teams and clubs and events such as the Gay Games often provide a space to identify as a lesbian and belong to a community.

Summer (36 years) also placed importance on personal networks established at the Games:

I think that’s [the social aspect] the positive thing that comes out of it. You get to meet a whole lot of people that you wouldn’t otherwise and in our environment... where you know being gay you are the minority [usually] and for a change you are the majority, which is an interesting experience.

Similarly, Cassandra suggested that the very experience of participating at the Gay Games and winning a silver medal meant that she developed a closer bond with existing teammates who did not attend the Games. ‘My team-mates were so supportive... because they were proud, they were more proud of my silver medal than I was’ (Cassandra, 52 years). Therefore, the experience of participating at the Games had provided new social connections and reinvigorated existing ones.

Such bonding may be attributed to both accessibility of the Games, being held in Australia (making the cost of attending less than it would be for an overseas event), and the financial independence of the participants.

Participation in the Gay Games, and the supportive bonding that arose from it, may not have been possible if these women were younger and therefore potentially less financially independent. Symons (2002) explains that the Gay Games is still an event that is largely for the 'affluent, developed nations of the world' (112). The relatively secure economic position of the participants discussed in this chapter ensured that these women were able to socialise together outside of the club and attend events such as the Gay Games (which strengthened their bond as team-mates and friends), and provided the space to make new friends at such events. On the other hand, access to the Games is not available to everyone who may wish to enter and as such, the Gay Games may also provide a culture of exclusion.

Can the Games Also Provide a Culture of Exclusion?

The logo of the upcoming Paris 2018 Gay Games 10 includes the slogan 'ALL EQUAL' under the Federation of Gay Games logo (Paris2018 2017). This kind of slogan suggests equality of access as well as equality related to acceptance and inclusion, regardless of ability, race and sexuality. However, this may simply not be the case. It must be acknowledged that events like the Gay Games and Out Games are, for financial and cultural reasons, not accessible to all. The Gay Games are a largely a white, gay male, middle-class event, where the majority of those who participate are from developed countries, particularly from the United States (Symons 2010). The 'base fee' of the Paris 2018 Gay Games is up to €205 (approximately 300AUD) and covers some aspects of participation whilst at the event, but excludes entry as a participant to sporting competitions and as a spectator to cultural events. Access to sporting events are additional to the 'base' fee (sporting fees cost up to €130 (approximately \$200AUD) per event and cultural event prices have not yet been released) (Paris2018 2017). Therefore, registration just to attend the event and participate in one sport can be as much as \$500AUD. As such, participants must be sufficiently wealthy to incur not only the base fee and sporting/cultural fees but also the high cost of

travel, accommodation and meals in order to partake in this 'inclusive' experience. In reality, attending the Games is a luxury which is only available to a certain section of the population.

Both Symons (2010) and Davidson (2002, 2013) have reflected on this culture of exclusivity relating to class, sexuality and costs at the Games. Davidson (2002) suggests that the Gay Games have always been commercialised and that this message of commodification and commercialisation is evident in the image of the 'gay athletic and cultural pride'. For instance, traditionally, the dominant marketing image at the Games has included a lithe, fit and athletic gay male body (Symons 2002). Symon's (2010) suggests that the Gay Games organisers have actively pursued the 'supposedly lucrative pink dollar' of the LGBT communities (102). According to Symons (2010):

Gay media and marketing companies began to point out that gay men and lesbians were an affluent and desirable market to reach. Consumption patterns included frequent dining out, travelling, purchasing of music, books, using credit cards more often, and generally enjoying the 'good life'. (103)

With such thinking, it was deemed appropriate that the costs of participating in the Gay Games were not modest. However, of course, such generalisations about supposed wealth do not apply to all within the LGBT communities. Therefore, the Games are beyond the economic reach of many in their target audience.

Some effort, however, to redress the issue of accessibility has been made by the organisers of the Gay Games. The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) Scholarship Program is one example which both recognises the financial burden of attending the games and aims to redress that burden by offering a number of scholarships to what they call 'economically-challenged athletes' from 'underrepresented populations or regions of the world' (Federation of Gay Games 2017). The scholarship program relies on donations through a 'gofundme' site and encourages previous attendees and supporters of the Gay Games to donate. This ultimately suggests that the more wealthy are funding the less wealthy to attend. While this is, no doubt, an admirable scholarship program, it is also quite evident that even the organisers consider that for many people, attending without financial help would be impossible.

The scholarship requires recipients to be ‘deserving’ without clearly outlining what that means. The application itself asks applicants to prove their poor financial situation (Federation of Gay Games 2017). Applicants for the scholarship are not only required to state their employment status, annual revenue from all income and pensions and the total amount across all their bank accounts, but must provide bank statements for two years to prove their lack of wealth (Federation of Gay Games 2017). Those who already have a valid passport (a costly item to obtain) are advantaged as the scholarship does not cover this and passport and visa information must be included on the application. Such an application process relies on the applicant’s honesty and ability to access such documentation, and it potentially opens up the process to being abused and exploited by those who do not require financial help to attend such events.

Additionally, the less wealthy in society are in the somewhat conflicted position of asking for a hand-out in order to attend something that will potentially empower them. There are, of course, many people for whom, even with this monetary aid, attendance at the Games is beyond their financial capabilities. Thus, the empowerment, friendship and affirmation, which is facilitated through connections with like-minded others in sport to be gained via participation in the Gay Games, is fundamentally inequitable. The fact that the Games are only available to those who can afford to participate negates the premise of inclusion as advertised by the Gay Games. Therefore, this study is a snapshot of a specific group of middle-class, educated, economically independent women, and might not necessarily be the experience of all women. Additionally, the experiences for gay men, bisexuals or transgendered individuals might also provide a different story as touched on above.

Concluding Comments

The simultaneous inclusion and exclusion that occurs at the Gay Games provides a contribution to the knowledge about the Gay Games and an insight into the lived experiences of some of the participants at the Games. Although there are political and power struggles between communities within the LGBT population, essentially the Gay Games can

provide a space where diversity, gender and sexual orientation are celebrated. Additionally, the Gay Games provides a space and opportunity for like-minded active people to come together. However, the (albeit brief) snapshot of the participants in this study along with information about the costs of entering the Games shows that participants are predominately middle-class, gay male or lesbian-identified adults and have access to disposable incomes. Therefore, the luxury of celebration and involvement at the Games is inaccessible for many. In fact, Davidson (2013) suggests that the Gay Games reiterate 'global white, Western, bourgeois privilege' (65).

The Gay Games have long claimed to be inclusive of all and the organisers have been proactive in providing policies to promote an equal representation of women and men, participation opportunities regardless of fitness level, ability, HIV/AIDS and transgender status and offering alternatives to the heterosexist traditions of some sports (such as the inclusion of same-sex ballroom dancing at the Games). However, the Games can only be described as inclusive for those who participate at the Games, or more specifically, inclusive to all who can afford to attend. Most often, this includes individuals who are situated in a financially independent stage of life (late 30s, 40s and 50s). To be truly inclusive of all, it is apparent that a number of changes are required to be undertaken by the Gay Games. Such changes, which could include lowering the costs of participation at the Games, acknowledging that there are dominant communities present at the Games and focusing more on the participatory objectives of the original Games imagined by Waddell and Brown, would provide steps in the right direction for 'inclusion for all'.

Notes

1. From 2006, another multi-sport, mass participation event for the LGBT worldwide community was held, the Outgames (Outgames n.d.). Just like the Gay Games, the Outgames are open to all, regardless of sexual orientation.
2. However, participation at the Games is restricted to participants who are 18 years or over (Paris2018 2017).

3. Athletes such as Judith Arndt from Germany, (world champion and Olympic silver medal cyclist); Bruce Hayes from the United States, (Olympic gold medal swimmer); and Petra Rössner from Germany, (Olympic gold medal cyclist) have all competed in at least one Gay Games (Federation of Gay Games 2017).
4. Pseudonyms are used for both the hockey clubs and the participants. Participants for this study were chosen from a larger base of participants in Litchfield's PhD dissertation. Please see Litchfield 2012. Seven participants were chosen from NCHC and one participant was chosen from MCHC. All eight participants competed in the same team in the regular hockey season in 2002 when the Sydney Gay Games were held, and all eight participants competed in the 2002 Sydney Gay Games in either hockey or soccer.

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Part IV

Sport in Mid-life and Old Age

14

Doing 'More for Adult Sport': Promotional and Programmatic Efforts to Offset Adults' Psycho-social Obstacles

Bradley W. Young and Bettina Callary

Adult sport is *not* for all, but it could be for a heck of a lot more people than are currently engaging in it now. This is the premise from which we commence this chapter, from which we will further consider research on adult sport that might be used to encourage more middle-aged and older people to participate in sport. Accordingly, we intend to appraise our ongoing research as it relates to making a case for how we might go about pursuing '*More for adult sport*', but not necessarily '*Adult sport for all*'.

Sport participation can be a purposeful form of engagement for adults that can oftentimes have psycho-social benefits (Baker et al. 2010). Although benefits may sometimes be over-stated, we agree with contentions that the promotion of sport to more adults is a laudable goal that can profit more individuals as part of a larger population health scheme

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(Khan et al. 2012). We also feel that adult sport can be made significantly more accessible to more people, and many obstacles need to be addressed, including societal, cultural and economic inequities, stereotypes that do not encourage adult sport, the under-promotion of sport to adults, and the inadequate allotment of resources to adult sport. We do not portend to address all issues in this list; rather, we focus this chapter on two notions that could be addressed to improve accessibility: first, promotional and programming efforts can be improved to increase participants; secondly, coaching curriculum may presently be insufficient for the growing cohort of adult athletes.

To grow numbers of participants, programmers (clubs, leagues) and organizations (municipal, provincial and national sport agencies) must contemplate who might be attracted to sport and the types of recruits who will be engaged (or not) by promotional campaigns. Let us assume that there are a few types of potential recruits, including (a) those who know what adult sport is and what it offers, and who have decided they are not interested; (b) those who know what adult sport is and what it offers, but do not have the wherewithal (e.g., socio-economic) or standing to be able to act on their interest; and (c) those who do not know much about adult sport and the richness of experiences it may offer. Issues of increased 'accessibility' are important with regard to the latter two groups, but notions of accessibility differ greatly. We do not deny weighty issues of access associated with the second group; however, our focus is to address *informational* and *programming* obstacles that may continue to make adult sport inaccessible to many people who could be interested, and to critically review emerging research that may help address these obstacles.

Problems of inaccessibility may include not enough adults knowing of available programmes or receiving information attesting to richly rewarding opportunities in such programmes and/or why adult sport may be of personal benefit. If potential recruits are not aware of what they can gain through sport activity, they are less likely to seek out further information about programmes or join a sport league. We will now review our ongoing research to inform people about opportunities in adult sport, pointing to optimistic findings that may be applied to increase informational (cognitive) accessibility. This work is emerging, and thus we will point out limits in knowledge, boundaries regarding the application of findings, as well as equivocal areas that need to be fleshed out.

Informing People: Promoting Involvement Opportunities in Adult Sport

We actively research the psycho-social conditions that have encouraged Masters athletes (35+ years) to commit to sport because an understanding of these conditions might inform strategies to encourage new people to try sport. Findings can also inform efforts to tailor programming to better retain participants, and provide direction in terms of the messages/activities that can be provided to attract new recruits to adult sport (Young et al. 2015). We frame our work in the sport commitment model (SCM; Santi et al. 2014; Scanlan et al. 1993), whereby commitment is a result of an individual's appraisal of certain conditions, including enjoyment, involvement opportunities (IOs), social constraints, social support, personal investments and involvement alternatives (see Young and Weir 2015, for a review). One's perception that sport is inherently enjoyable (i.e., it affords pleasurable experiences that are consonant with participation and not arising from some ulterior outcome) is consistently the strongest determinant of commitment. An overly simplistic conclusion for sport promoters and programmers then is to emphasize the enjoyable aspects of adult sport. However, telling programmers to advertise or program for enjoyment can be a somewhat nebulous task as positive affect is indiscriminate.

The SCM also contends that IOs are positive predictors of people wanting to commit. Unlike the construct of enjoyment, IOs may be more discriminate because they can be measured as a discrete set of 'anticipated or expected benefits' (Weiss and Amorose 2008: 148) or 'valued opportunities that are present through continued sport involvement' (Scanlan et al. 1993: 8). Bennett and Young (2014) developed and preliminarily validated the IO Scale which assesses 11 different IOs relating to Masters swimming, such as opportunities to travel through sport, for testing and assessing oneself, for social recognition for competitive achievement, for social affiliation and for stress relief. IOs are significantly related to enjoyment and the effects of many different IOs on wanting to commit to sport are mediated by enjoyment. In other words, if one wishes to understand how to encourage more adults to commit to sport for enjoyment's sake, the secret may lie in the various antecedent IOs that people see as attractive and personally relevant.

Can Involvement Opportunities (IOs) Attract New Participants?

Lithopoulos and Young (2016) examined whether various IOs could be packaged into promotional messages and how such messages were received by 40–59-year-old Canadians (average age = 50.9, SD = 5.3, 60% female) *not* currently involved in sport. In a randomized controlled experiment, researchers created a three-minute-long on-line audio-visual presentation in which nine gain-frame messages were presented to participants. Gain-frame messages promote anticipated benefits or arguments for taking up behaviour (Rothman and Salovey 1997). In this case, each of the nine gain-frame messages articulated a different anticipated benefit that might be realized if one were to take up adult sport. For example, the gain-frame message representing the opportunity to be with friends through sport was articulated as ‘Masters sport participants tell us that it provides great opportunities for fellowship with other like-minded individuals. If you take up adult sport, you will get opportunities to make many friends whom you can interact with on a regular basis’. When participants opened a hyperlink, text-based messages (no images) were presented as a narrated slide show, with each sequential slide representing a different benefit/opportunity.

Compared to a control group, participants who watched these gain-frame messages were immediately more likely to seek out information by requesting newsletters about local adult sporting opportunities and programmes. One month later, adults who had watched the gain-frame messages were also more likely to have registered for adult sport programmes. Gain-frame participants reported greater intention to do more sport activity, and these effects lasted at least one month after receiving the online messages. These increases were significant for individuals who had not previously been inclined to seek out any information on adult sport compared to those individuals who may have previously thought about approaching adult sport activities. Optimistically, these results suggest that an uninitiated audience may be persuaded to consider adult sport using promotional messaging. The results should be understood, however, in the light of the fact that researchers used a highly screened sample with

multiple exclusionary criteria. Specifically, gain-frame participants had at least somewhat favourable attitudes towards sport, perceived their health to be sufficient to do sport, did not perceive sport as risky and had been at least moderately involved in sport in youth. The success of similar efforts may depend on targeted cohorts having distant prior sport experience and having internalized favourable attitudes towards sport long ago. We cannot assume similar success in encouraging adults with unfavourable attitudes toward sport and those who did not participate in youth. Future research is required to determine whether similar promotional messaging may work with broader cohorts, including adult sport initiates and not simply re-engagers who were sport participants in youth, and to determine whether actual sport activity (not just intentions) can be increased.

Further analyses on the same middle-aged sample (Lithopoulos et al. 2015) demonstrated how the promotion of IOs affected the way participants imagined themselves in adult sport in the future (i.e., their 'possible selves'; Markus and Nurius 1986). Compared to a control group, participants who received gain-frame messages elaborated significantly more (i.e., they typed far more text) about the future sport self that they would like to become, or their hoped-for selves. Although we cannot say for sure whether the complete set of nine IOs that had been presented accounted for the persuasive effects, analyses showed that three opportunities were particularly well received by this targeted cohort: 'for health and fitness', 'to be with friends through sport', and 'to delay the effects of aging'.

The appraisal of pro-youthful or anti-ageing themes (e.g., using sport to delay the effects of ageing) is likely potent for some individuals (Dionigi et al. 2013; Grant 2001; Rathwell and Young 2015), but we remain cautious in recommending the explicit promotion of delayed ageing as a means to attract new people (Gayman et al. 2017). In another study of younger (in their 20s) athletes' narratives on ageing possible selves, Phoenix and Sparkes (2007) described how 'hanging on' to a sporting possible self, despite age-related decline in performance, was indignant, fear-based, and not likely to promote healthy engagement. Although Lithopoulos et al. (2015) specifically examined adult athletes' elaborations on hoped-for possible selves, similar analyses viewed through a 'feared self' lens may show anti-ageing themes to be irrational and negative influences on sport participation. Elsewhere,

Dionigi and O’Flynn (2007) argued that efforts by Masters sportspersons to resist ageing may reinforce negative stereotypes about getting older. Thus, we are unsure about how anti-ageing promotion may influence those adults uninterested in sport, yet this is important to consider if sport is to be part and parcel of a larger population health promotion approach to adult physical activity. Moreover, considering that middle-aged and older adults ascribe to social norms pressuring them to remain youthful more than ever (Biggs et al. 2006), ageing messages may regulate the actions of sporting adults in an unhealthy way. Consistent with this notion, Bennett (2014) found that Masters swimmers’ orientation towards opportunities to delay the effects of ageing was associated with increased levels of obligatory commitment (i.e., feeling that they had to do sport as a duty or because of self-pressure) and was negatively associated with levels of sport enjoyment and functional sport commitment (i.e., feeling that they were doing sport voluntarily/freely). Future work should assess the potent effects of delayed ageing messages for those contemplating being more active compared to the negative effects of such messages on adults who are inactive and reluctant to contemplate physical activity.

Do Adult Sport Programmes Accommodate a Breadth of Motives?

Another problem of inaccessibility relates to the notion that programming options/activities may not suitably indulge prospective participants’ preferred motives. Not all adults have the same reasons for trying sport—their motivational profiles can be quite varied, so accessibility may be facilitated by programming for more diverse motivational profiles within the constituent activities of sport. Many people who have yet to be introduced to organized adult sport perceive it to be either foreclosed around competitive opportunities (in the case of Masters athletes) or overly focused on socialization (in the case of more recreational adult sport). When we have reviewed motivation literature, however, there is much heterogeneity in participatory motives reported by adult sport participants (see Medic

2010; Young 2011; Young and Medic 2011a). Establishing this breadth empirically is a worthy endeavour to increase awareness of and change peoples' pre-conceptions of adult sport.

One line of inquiry in this area has been sensitized by the fact that we are Canadian sport researchers and not physical activity/exercise researchers. In Canada, policy decisions and research related to sport (i.e., organized pursuits involving some degree of competition) are governed by Sport Canada. Sport is a constituent of the broader term 'physical activity'. Policies related to other physical activity constituents (e.g., exercise, fitness, active recreation) are governed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC); although PHAC's physical activity guidelines mention sport, PHAC does not concern itself with sport. Thus, we find it incumbent upon us as sport researchers to determine the value of what sport offers (more, or differently) compared to other adult physical activity constituent contexts such as exercise or fitness activity. The argument in support of 'More for sport' depends on answering questions such as: Does sport programming offer a greater number of IOs, or accommodate a greater number of diverse participatory motives for prospective participants, than exercise or fitness activity?

Vallerand and Young (2017) investigated 35–57-year-old Canadians (average age = 47.2, SD = 6.0; 56% female) who identified as being highly active in either *organized* sport or exercise contexts, meaning that they reported activities in relation to a league/facility for which they had formally registered. There were two contrasting groups in the investigation—one group acknowledged being in adult sport programmes, and the second group acknowledged membership in adult exercise programmes. The validity of these groups was ensured by asking forced-choice questions wherein participants identified as predominantly a sportsperson/exerciser, and with survey items assessing the extent of their physical activity in each of the two contexts. Using surveys, researchers assessed participants' perceptions of 11 participatory motives (such as enjoyment, competition, health, stress relief, social affiliation) with respect to their activity context. On average, organized sportspersons and organized exercisers reported valuing a similar number of personally important motives (about three each), or being motivated for a similar

number of distinct reasons. As the set size of participatory motives increased, so did participants' level of commitment to their activity, but this relationship was relatively similar for sportspersons and exercisers. Still, we agree with those who have suggested that sport and exercise contexts may accommodate very different motivational needs (Kilpatrick et al. 2005), and that tailoring to these differences may need to be considered in programming and in advertising adult sport. Our research continues to examine differences in motivational profiles between (age-matched and activity-level matched) organized sport and organized exercise participants. For example, Vallerand and Young (2014) found that sportspersons judged competitive motives and social affiliation motives more highly; however, scores for three motives (enjoyment, stress relief, social affiliation) predicted commitment equally for sportspersons and exercisers. Additional analyses showed that adult sport participants' commitment was significantly associated with motives for 'personal goals and challenges' and 'appearance' (e.g., looking younger and more attractive), although these themes could not be directly contrasted between contexts because of challenges in validating questionnaire measures equally in the two contexts.

Although our quantitative results have yet to yield many significant differences, we see the future pursuit of between-context questions as important using novel and more varied methods. Future research might pursue qualitative approaches to generate richer narratives on personal meaning, purpose and fulfilment, and how they vary between contexts. The argument in support of 'More for sport' may depend on illustrating that sport offers a different sense of fulfilment for a lot of people who feel that they cannot find that same fulfilment in non-sport physical activity venues. Admittedly, our thinking is influenced by the dualistic reality we see in public physical activity promotion strategies for ageing Canadians in that far greater attention and resources is paid to non-sport activities, with adult sport being an afterthought. Such dualism may not apply elsewhere; still, we contend that more data are required attesting to what the sport context *uniquely* fulfils for adults. In the long run, if sport could more fully advertise to, or more fully satisfy adults' various wants, needs and values—if sport programmes were seen as accommodating a broad range of participatory motives—then sport could potentially be welcoming to more adults.

A Few Words on Exclusion and Generalizability

It is a worthy endeavour to promote gainful conditions and possible benefits to adult sport and, if done effectively, they may alleviate informational and programming obstacles for many potential new recruits. Conceptually, however, whether new recruits decide to engage in sport likely involves a process of weighing IOs against barriers/costs. Thus, on a broader level, the effectiveness of gain-framed promotional efforts needs to be measured against constraining conditions, including both perceived obstacles and structural inequities for access to sport.

In referring back to the second type of potential new recruits we characterized earlier, there may be adults who are interested and who perceive ways in which adult sport can benefit them, but they do not have the privileged standing to be able to act on their interest. Indeed, our appraisal of the research on Masters sport shows that it is often a place where like-minded, socio-economically advantaged, predominantly white and Westernized, highly educated and already-active people gather. Although adult sport has significant work to do to become more inclusive and diversified, we wonder whether this exclusive characterization of Masters sport is exaggerated by sampling methods. Much of the research on Masters sport, be it quantitative or qualitative, has used convenience sampling. Researchers (ourselves included) gravitate to where we can find the most people. Data collection often occurs in or around larger scale national/international Masters games/championships that are highly commodified events often associated with sport tourism and substantial travel, registration, and accommodation expenses (see the chapter by Dionigi and Litchfield in this volume). Privileged, affluent people dominate such events and this bias likely places a limit on the generalizability of empirical findings to more diverse samples. It is imperative that future research documents whether more ethnically/racially diverse and less socio-economically privileged cohorts find access to adult sport closer to home, in local clubs and leagues. These types of studies, viewed through a more critical lens on

inclusion, are needed to provide information about whether/how capacity, infrastructure and resources for adult sport can be properly built at regional/provincial levels. If such infrastructure or resources do not exist or are not affordable, for example, then the efficacy of future informational and programming strategies to grow adult sport will be hindered.

Much of what has been discussed relates to the typology of adults who just do not know enough about opportunities for adult sport that may be available to them and we have assumed that there may be many potentially interested adults who are not yet aware of how rich an adult sport experience could be, possibly because they exclusively associate such an experience with youth sport. One notable limitation of our work is that it is predicated upon the notion that there are adults who would be potentially interested should they be provided with persuasive information that resonates with them, a tenet which is broadly held by many researchers working in the area of promotional messaging (Petty et al. 2009). However, we do not know how large this tract of interested people may be, and there are certainly larger tracts of people who are not interested, claiming they are 'not the sporty type' (Booth et al. 1997). Our work is also grounded in the tradition of behaviour change, which dictates that cognitive correlates of activity are presented to first persuade people about benefits/outcomes of an activity, and that increases on such cognitive correlates will facilitate the link between intentions and action at some later point (Cavill and Bauman 2004). Some empirical work (e.g., Rhodes 2015) contrarily suggests that people choose not to do activities even when they are aware of their benefits and intentions do not always translate into action as would be predicted by models of reasoned action. Thus, even interested participants who may be open to receiving information about opportunities/programming for adult sport (information which might be expected to enhance the likelihood of making a logic-based decision to engage in sport) may dismiss engagement for other germane reasons, such as affect (sport just isn't fun) or anxiety (I might get hurt). Thus, our emerging work and the potential generalizability of persuasive effects must be understood with these limitations in mind.

Tailoring Curriculum to the Needs of Adult Athletes

In this final section, we discuss how programming for Masters sport, such as sport coaching curriculum guides, presently either ignores the unique needs of older athletes in structured and organized (coached) environments or understates the need to adapt coaching practices to meet the nuances of this unique athletic cohort (Young et al. 2014). Our ongoing research (Callary et al. 2015a, 2017) explores whether current sport coaching curriculum meets the needs of Masters athletes and what Masters athletes want from their coaches. We suggest that programming and personnel obstacles that continue to make adult sport inaccessible or uninteresting to many people may be the programme leaders working with Masters athletes who have a lack of understanding of the *art* of coaching, or the psycho-social nuances that coaches may use to successfully engage adult athletes in sport. It has been purported that up to 70% of serious-minded Masters swimmers have coaches (Young and Medic 2011b). Given this large number of adult athletes whose sport programming is facilitated by coaches, and that coaches may be front-line ambassadors who develop and advertise programs catering to new adult recruits, it is important to consider how coaches can create appropriate learning situations for their adult athletes.

While coaches often learn their trade from experience working with athletes, they also consult, learn, and benefit from coaching curriculum guides tailored to working with their athletes (e.g., research-based sport-specific exercises, age-appropriate games, or, as we argue, tips for motivating adult athletes to learn). A review of current curriculum guides for coaching Masters athletes has yielded few results. There exist coaching manuals/tips predominantly related to physiological challenges in adult athletes (e.g., Australian Sports Commission 2010; Coaching Association of Canada 2013), yet they provide little evidence of understanding unique psycho-social needs of Masters athletes. The little information that does exist on psycho-social coaching aspects does not appear to be informed by empirical work directed at the question. For example, US Masters Swimming (USMS 2015)

adult swim program resources include information regarding types of adult swimmers, which is derived from membership surveys, as well as a short list of items regarding what Masters swimmers want from their coaches and Masters coaching leadership tips. Kemp (2012) compiled information relating to psycho-social aspects, but it was anecdotal in parts, based on research adapted from younger athletic populations, or research on participation motivation from Masters athletes not specifically working with coaches. What is missing in these compilations is research-based evidence about the particular nuances of what adult athletes want specifically from coaches, and how coaches use that information.

What Might Be Different about Adults' Psycho-social Coaching Needs?

The idea that coaches take a unique approach when facilitating learning experiences for adult athletes stems from a larger body of literature on adult learning. There are six core adult learning principles of *andragogy*, meaning 'any intentional and professionally guided activity that aims at a change in adult persons' (Knowles et al. 2012: 58). The first principle is that learners need to know why they are doing something and how the content relates to their experiences. The second principle is that learners' self-concept is often based on their abilities to take responsibility for their decisions (self-directed). Next, prior experiences of learners are important resources in how they subsequently learn. The fourth principle states that adult learners' readiness to learn will have an impact on how much and how deeply they learn. The fifth principle notes that adults are motivated to learn when they perceive that the learning will help them perform tasks and deal with problems. Finally, adults' motivation to learn is largely based on intrinsic values and personal payoff. Motivation may be blocked by internal barriers, such as negative self-concept, or external barriers such as inaccessibility to opportunities, resources, time constraints, and/or '*programs that violate principles of adult learning*' (Knowles et al. 2012: 67).

Not all adults always want to learn according to these principles, because in any given situation the goals for learning and individual and situational differences will mediate which principles are more or less important. However, Knowles and colleagues contend that generally, adults learn effectively using some to all of these principles. Typical ideologies of teaching dictate that the teacher very often has responsibility to make all decisions about the learning, and the learner's self-concept is highly dependent on the teacher. This teacher-directed approach may be appropriate when a particular learner has had no experience with a content area, when the learner needs to acquire subject matter quickly to accomplish a given requirement, or when the learner has no internal need to learn the content. It may not be the most appropriate approach in many instances when adults do have some interest, experience, and motivation to learn, such as when adults choose to take part in coached sport programs.

When we compare these adult learning principles to qualitative research that we have conducted on coached Masters swimmers (Callary et al. 2015a; Rathwell et al. 2015), we note many congruencies. We interviewed 10 Canadian Masters swimmers who all swam competitively within coached club teams to discover their experiences, wants, preferences, and interests in having coaches. Swimmers talked about needing coaches to help them understand why they were doing what they were doing, and how coaches helped them diagnose the gap between where they wanted to be and their present performance. Swimmers also described how coaches exposed them to new possibilities for self-fulfilment (pushing them), and how coaches showed a caring and wholly involved attitude towards the athletes. We interpret these themes consonantly with andragogical teaching principles that allow for effective learning conditions, helping adult athletes feel a need to learn, and in creating an environment characterized by mutual trust, respect, and acceptance (Knowles et al. 2012). Our findings further showed that athletes wanted the coach to share in the design of learning experiences and the selection of practice methods. They also wanted the coach to know who they were (based on their previous experiences) and felt that this was meaningful to how they benefitted from coaching. For example, when

discussing when and how they preferred coaches to give feedback, swimmers expected coaches to tailor feedback according to whether they preferred direct/indirect and public/private feedback. Finally, athletes talked about the importance of coaches creating varied and challenging practices that held them accountable to the training and a long-term plan geared towards competitive performance. This helped athletes feel that they were receiving quality programming. Many swimmers described how their coaches took steps to involve them in understanding and formulating practice/season goals, and creating ways in which they could measure their progress.

Callary et al. (2015b) strove to understand whether there was a match between what a female Masters dragon boat racer (aged 58, international competitor) wanted and needed from a coach, and what a female Masters dragon boat coach (aged 22, international-level coach) did with her team. Interview themes yielded definite connections to andragogy, including the importance of the coach acknowledging athletes' previous experiences in and out of sport, athletes' interests in understanding the rationale for coaching decisions and athletes exercising their choice for autonomy. Finally, we interviewed 11 coaches of Masters swimmers to explore their coaching approaches and how they learn to coach adult athletes (Callary et al. 2015c, 2017). Results of a deductive analysis using the andragogy principles showed congruency between the coaches' approaches and the six principles.

Overall, our work shows emerging evidence of andragogical principles (Callary et al. 2017; Knowles et al. 2012; MacLellan et al. 2016) enacted by Masters swim coaches to: (a) help adult athletes share in the responsibility of learning experiences, thereby increasing athletes' commitment to the learning; (b) match strategies to adult athletes' personalities and previous experiences; and (c) engage adult athletes in effective conditions of learning in which athletes perceived the goals to be *their* goals, and in which athletes had a sense of progress towards those goals. While these results match well with the model of andragogy, more research is needed to explore how these principles apply (or do not apply) to other adult athletes and other sports that may have different experiences, goals, and situations. Such research will help to better understand if and how coaches are actually applying these principles of teaching. In terms of

practical implications, our data show that Masters programs could better adhere to principles of adult learning in order to enrich the sport experience. Notably, the Masters coaches in Callary et al. (2015c) failed to identify the importance of coach certification/accreditation given through coach education courses because they perceived them to be geared towards working with youth, not adults. Current practices in coach education programs do not differentiate teaching principles for coaches working with various age cohorts. To this end, we argue that more empirical work is needed to explore and subsequently inform proper coaching curriculum that may aid in effectively sustaining and recruiting Masters athletes.

Conclusion

We invite policy makers, who are tasked with encouraging more adults to meet national physical activity guidelines and promoting active ageing lifestyles, to attend more to possibilities around organized adult sport. 'More for adult sport' means that opportunities for adult sport should fit more firmly in a multi-faceted approach for encouraging physical activity for ageing adults, meaning that significantly more adults may choose sport as a constituent modality/outlet for their physical activity pursuits than is presently the case. Yet, we believe that there remain informational and programming deficiencies that limit the growth of adult sport. In light of these constraints, we considered how to make sport accessible to more people, focusing on findings that have bearing on sport recruitment, programming, and curriculum design.

In particular, we contend that a much better job can be done to encourage 'More for adult sport' by finding strategies to effectively re-engage 'estranged' middle-aged adults who participated in youth, who have open attitudes towards adult sport, and who are presently in suitable health to re-engage. We argue that informational interventions (messaging) to such a targeted cohort may be useful in getting the word out about opportunities and the richness of adult sport activity, and nudging more people to register and start up again. Care must be taken in focusing campaign messages on various IOs that might be most attractive to new

recruits. From a programming perspective, adult sport might offer a greater breadth of experiences and might satisfy a broader set of motives in its participants. Thus, policy makers could ensure that sport programs offer rich and diversified activities that motivate people for many different reasons; in turn, researchers can investigate adult sport's broad motives that may attract more people. Finally, the absence of adult sport coaching curriculum, and the lack of work on this topic (relative to coaching younger cohorts) signifies inattention by sport organizations and programmers towards this cohort, and a missed opportunity to grow adult sport. Policy makers should be sensitized to the fact that a generic coaching curriculum guide for all coaches/athletes may not be the most effective for adult athletes, and that we may need to go beyond adapting guides intended for coaching children, and work specifically on developing curriculum guides and information pertaining to unique psychosocial nuances among adults.

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15

The Mid-life 'Market' and the Creation of Sporting Sub-cultures

Rylee A. Dionigi and Chelsea Litchfield

Upon entering the registration area for the Pan Pacific Masters Games, I was funneled through about 12 booths that included Games merchandise, local tourist information and exhibitions. Six of them were selling sports-related goods, such as 'custom made' sports team apparel, 'functional and fashionable' swimwear, 'revolutionary' running shoes, 'state-of-the-art devices' for pain relief and a 'ground-breaking' functional performance exercise program. Four booths were dedicated to promoting the next three Masters Games events to be held locally (Lismore), nationally (Australia) and internationally (New Zealand). One booth was occupied by an airport transfers company and another the Cancer Council. The registration tables were positioned at the back. When I collected my backpack and event program, I noticed that inside my backpack was a QLD events guide, swimwear magazine and Gold Coast visitor's map. As I exited

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the area, I was able to collect information and discount coupons related to dining out, theme parks and sportswear. (*Chelsea participated in golf at the 2014 Pan Pacific Masters Games and the above describes her first ever registration experience at a Masters Games*).

Events dedicated and marketed to Masters/Veteran's sport 'consumers' are gaining popularity across Western countries, with most of the participants aged in their 40s and 50s. This chapter focuses on how the Masters sport movement has evolved into a place where like-minded, middle-class, already-physically active people gather in pursuit of leisure and pleasure. We draw on observational, documentary and interview data collected over a number of studies to highlight the various subcultures within this movement and effects of the commercialisation of Masters sport.

When Masters athletes are positioned as consumers, events like the Pan Pacific Masters Games (described above) become economically exclusive and a place where others can profit. The marketisation of Masters sport also makes it difficult for researchers, politicians and corporations to claim that increasing adults' participation in sport is ultimately about making people 'healthier'. This is not to deny that the individuals participating in these events experience many physical, mental and social benefits, which is a point we have made elsewhere (Dionigi 2005, 2008, 2010a; Dionigi et al. 2011, 2013; Litchfield and Dionigi 2011, 2012). Our purpose here is to demonstrate that the Masters sport movement has become a place where the market can use the 'Sport for All' and 'Healthy Lifestyles' dogma to exploit and regulate financially comfortable middle-aged adults who have a desire for sport performance, travel, consumption and socialising. To make these claims, the chapter is framed by sociological perspectives on the commodification of mass adult sporting events (Hastings et al. 2005; Ryan and Trauer 2005).

Absence of Sociological Critiques of Masters Sport

The majority of research on Masters sport focuses on the motivations, performances and experiences of Masters athletes, with the ultimate goal of increasing participation rates in sport and/or measuring the economic

impact of Masters events (Ryan and Trauer 2005; Young et al. 2015). Notably, in 2013 the Australian Sports Commission teamed up with market analysts, GfK Blue Moon (see www.gfk.com/au/Solutions/), to conduct the Market Segmentation Study on sport participation trends among the Australian adult population (aged 14–65 years). This study identified ten consumer segments, namely, current club member segments (Loyalists, Socially Engaged, Sport Driven and Apathetic Clubbers) and non-club member segments (Sidelined Sportsters, Club Wary, Ponderers, Self-focused, Sport Indifferent and Sport Atheists). In recognition that sporting club membership has stagnated across Australia, this study resulted in recommendations about the types of products and messages necessary to appeal to each segment, with an end goal of attracting and retaining increased club sport memberships. It is often assumed and stated amongst such stakeholders of sport that increased participation in club sport will result in 'healthier' individual and population outcomes.

Masters sport is one type of club sport. Masters sport emerged in the 1960s in the United States and in the 1970s in Australia (Dionigi 2008; Weir et al. 2010). The post-WW2 period established particular social, economic and demographic conditions that gave rise to the Masters sport movement in Western countries (Gilleard and Higgs 2013; Hastings et al. 2005). The economic prosperity that was experienced during this time led to an enlargement of the upper and middle classes, increases in disposable income and the expansion of leisure time (Gilleard and Higgs 2013; Hastings et al. 2005). In the context of mass consumer societies, age-based subcultures have emerged in various aspects of our lives, including leisure pursuits like Masters sport. The most economically developed areas, such as Europe, North America and parts of Oceania, have the most Masters sporting clubs or organisations (Hastings et al. 2005). For example, the Australian Veteran's Hockey Association was established in 1979 with the first Australia-wide competition held in 1980 for teams comprising players aged over 40 and over 45 years (Yeates 1999). Over the years, the competition has expanded to include teams of players aged over 50 years in 1985, then over 55 years in 1991 and over 60 years since 1996 (Yeates 1999). Players are either continuing with their sport as they age, or new players are starting to play the game at an older age (Dionigi 2008).

Masters sport typically begins at age 35, but in some sports, such as gymnastics and swimming, participation can begin when a person is aged in their early 20s because it is considered past the age of peak performance for that sport (Weir et al. 2010). Masters events are held locally, nationally and globally, and can include multi-sport carnivals like the World Masters Games (WMG) or the Pan Pacific Masters Games (Pan Pacs), or individual sport competitions such as the World Masters Track and Field or the State Masters/Veteran's Hockey Titles. Competition is organised in 5–10 year age groups, with individual events being in five-year age bands (e.g., 45–49 or 50–54), while sporting team events are typically competed in 10-year age bands. The duration of Masters Games events is generally 3–10 days and often involves a social and entertainment component every night of the event.

The overarching representative body of Masters sport worldwide, the International Masters Games Association (IMGA, constituted in 1995), aims to encourage sustained involvement in sport and physical activity across the lifespan. IMGA support the Olympic movement and promote the 'Sport for All' philosophy. In fact, the philosophy of the IMGA, taken from the Olympic Charter is 'The practice of sport is every human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport in accordance with his or her needs' (www.imga.ch/).

In other words, the IMGA aims 'to promote lifelong competition, friendship and understanding between mature sportspeople, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, or sport status' (www.imga.ch/). Another key aim is 'Promoting and encouraging mature athletes from all over the world to practice sports regularly and to participate in Masters Games, with the awareness that competitive sport can continue throughout life and improve personal fitness level' (www.imga.ch/). In line with the aims of the IMGA, the mottos of recent Masters Games have included: 'Fit, fun and forever young' (2009 Sydney World Masters Games) and 'Sport for life, sport for all' (2013 Torino World Masters Games). Additionally, one of the goals of the Australian Masters Games (AMG) is to 'encourage a positive active lifestyle in the community that is balanced with social outcome and opportunities' (www.australianmastersgames.com).

What appears to be silenced in such aims, mottos and past research on Masters sport is the recognition of class-based and moral agendas that

underlie this movement. Such recognition will allow us, as a society, to think differently about sport and admit the obvious—that sport is not for everyone (and never will be). In other words, current 'Sport for All' and 'Active/Healthy Lifestyles' arguments that present mass sport participation as an unanimously worthwhile, 'healthy' choice for everyone, regardless of age, class or circumstance, need to be challenged and questioned. Despite the shift in impact and culture of the Masters Games from mass participation to globalisation, commercialisation, economic elitism and profit, little academic literature has addressed the effects of this evolving phenomenon on the those who participate as 'consumers' and, perhaps more importantly, those who are excluded or choose not to participate.

A sociological critique of the Masters sport phenomenon is missing in the literature. Therefore, our research offers a critical examination of the culture of Masters sport and argues that the Masters Games, particularly international events like the Pan Pacs and WMG, have become a site for mid-life markets and the creation of sporting sub-cultures. In particular, we provide ethnographic evidence of the ways in which international Masters Games events have become a 'middle-class playground' where markets can pander to the already-privileged middle-aged adult.

For the purpose of this chapter, mid-life is understood as a period of life where individuals tend to reevaluate their sense of identity and confront issues of bodily decline, morbidity and death (Blaikie 1999). According to Partington et al. (2005), it is highly possible that mid-life is particularly challenging for older athletes (or older physically active people in general) because they may have come to identify themselves through the effective use of their body and sport places a lot of emphasis on the youthful, robust, performing body.

Our chapter provides a background to the emergence of the Masters Games as a commodity, using our data to demonstrate key reasons for, and implications of, this occurrence. Two key implications that will be discussed are economic exclusivity and the disjuncture between the Healthy Lifestyles rhetoric framing such events and the lived reality of participants. Therefore, we offer a critical analysis of the ways in which the Sport for All and Healthy Lifestyles ideals (which justified the establishment of the Masters movement) are being manipulated by the market to suit the needs of those with social capital.

The Commodification of Masters Sport

Today, middle-aged and older people are readily encouraged by society (through media, advertisements, popular press, health promotion and a lot of exercise science literature) to remain active as part of a healthy lifestyle, which has created new market niches in sport. Fundamentally, as Ryan and Trauer explain, the interest of many (particularly white, middle-class) middle-aged and older athletes in remaining active characterises an extension in the marketplace for major sportswear, tourism and other companies 'that in past decades would have ceased with the onset of the third decade of a person's life' (2005: 178).

Notably, the interests of Masters athletes vary in that the Masters movement has become dominated by subcultures, such as sport party-goers, sport travellers and performance-oriented athletes. These groups not only value and exclude particular ways of ageing, consumption and sport participation, but provide sub-markets within Masters sport for commercial interests and Masters sporting bodies to tap into, profit from and/or expand at the various Masters Games events. As Ryan and Trauer explain, 'Masters games represent a combination of commercial interests by the sporting and tourism industries, combined with the growth in the public sector of an administrative class of sports promoters', (2005: 178). Hastings et al. (2005) describe the process in which contemporary sports are globalised by using the growth of Masters swimming in the United States as an example. They explain the initiation and expansion of Masters swimming in relation to global economic processes, making it applicable to understanding the growth of all Masters sports. 'The globalization of sports literature is provocative in documenting the intrusion of corporations into a social domain that in the public mind previously was not typically associated with profits' (Hastings et al. 2005: 135).

Masters sport has become a commodity as evidenced by the increased corporate involvement in, and the cost of participating and spending at, mass adult sporting events (Hastings et al. 2005). With regard to Masters Games events specifically, Ryan and Trauer (2005) outline three key economic and social reasons for the expansion of the Games. Each of these reasons is discussed below using examples of our observational,

documentary and interview data collected from the 2009 World Masters Games (WVG), 2011 New South Wales Veteran's Women Hockey Titles (State Vet's), 2013 Australian Masters Games (AMG) and 2014 Pan Pacific Masters Games (Pan Pacs). Therefore, our data was collected in regional, state, national and international sporting contexts and the athletes ranged from first time attendees to seasoned participants. Our focus is on participants aged in their 40s and 50s as they represent the largest age groups in such events and, in chronological terms, are considered middle-aged.

Catering for Participant Spending and Partying

First, from an economic perspective, Masters events, particularly national and international Games which attract non-local participants and potentially large-spending competitors, are regarded as beneficial for host cities, corporate sponsors and event organisers (Gillett and Kelly 2006; Ryan and Trauer 2005). Ryan and Trauer explained that 'a second reason for the development of Masters games lies in the need for commercial interests in sportswear and associated goods to both respond to and confirm trends that extend the market for their products' (2005: 178). Essentially, the appeal for corporations being involved in such events has shifted from possible sponsorship to a focus on how much economic profit can be made. 'Masters games are thus driven by a nexus of individual interest and changing personal lifestyles that emphasize fitness and a commercial and public sector interest', (Ryan and Trauer 2005: 178).

Events such as the Pan Pacs, AMG and WVG (which have been the focus of observations by the lead author over the past 15 years) 'are seen as attracting above-average income and educated groups who are drawn not only by feelings of competition but also by friendly social environments to which, in turn, they contribute' (Ryan and Trauer 2005: 178). Ways in which Games' participants contribute include attending the scheduled nightly social events and purchasing alcohol, dining out at local restaurants, paying for up to ten nights hotel accommodation, visiting local attractions such as theme parks, purchasing event merchandise and sportswear, in addition to paying the registration fee to

play their sport. For example, at the State Vet's women's hockey event, many of the women were observed dancing, singing, dressing-up and drinking alcohol at the annual championship dinner. Many were also seen smuggling their own alcohol into the dinner (to avoid waiting in line at the bar), which included wine, spirits and hip flasks (Litchfield and Dionigi 2011, 2012). During the day, some of these women were seen drinking alcohol on the sidelines, playing hockey while wearing crazy hats or wigs and having whacky team mascots (like a mannequin family dressed in a team's uniform). Several women explained how they play practical jokes on each other at their hotel, such as placing 'glad wrap' over the toilet seat. Similar party-goers were seen at the Pan Pacs and AMG wearing hats made of beer cartons and t-shirts promoting the drinking of wine while at the playing fields during the day. One particular shirt worn by two middle-aged women at the State Vet's was embroidered with 'My drinking team has a hockey problem' (Litchfield and Dionigi 2012: 182).

The Pan Pacs, WMG and AMG events each had scheduled entertainment every night for ten nights that included live music, opening and closing ceremonies and other social activities. In addition, individual teams and sporting clubs organised their own social functions that often involved dining out and consuming alcohol. At the Pan Pacs, one particular team of 40–50 years old female hockey players were overheard complaining about feeling 'hung over' after attending a 1980s-style party the night before. One participant further explained that she needed to start feeling better as she was heading out again ('to party on') the following night. At the Pan Pacs Opening Ceremony, groups of both men and women were dressed in costumes; however, more middle-aged women were in attendance than men. Two male baseball teams' costumes included beer drinking tube hats and Hawaiian shirts. One female netball player was dressed up as Wonder Woman and another female basketball player was an elaborate Egyptian Pharaoh, who explained that she had been designing, buying for and planning her costume for a year. Other female teams were seen wearing 'Dollar Store' items such as pink cat ears and gloves, matching green wigs and devil horns. Interestingly, when a female 'Myths & Legends' basketball team (as indicated on their team shirts)

was observed leaving the celebration early, they explained that it was because they felt they were 'not organised for it' (meaning that because they did not have a costume, they felt they did not belong).

Moreover, at the Pan Pacs, women softball players were seen consuming soft drinks and alcohol and, at the conclusion of one game, three players were seen smoking cigarettes immediately after coming off the field. Similarly, at the men's baseball several players lit up a cigarette or drank from a bottle of beer as soon as they came off the pitch. One man in a 45-years-plus team was wearing a pink fluffy hat with four pink fake penises protruding from it. He explained that he had won the 'Dickhead Award' from his teammates for making an error on the sporting field. He also explained that he had been consuming alcohol for five nights straight so he 'didn't stay long at the Opening Ceremony because [he] couldn't keep up and then keep playing' baseball twice per day for the eight days of competition at the Pan Pacs event. These findings do not seem to align with the 'healthy lifestyles' arguments used to promote such Games (and health promotion discourses in general). Our data also appear to contradict claims often made by exercise scientists that Masters athletes are typically 'healthier' than their contemporaries.

Targeting the Fit, Performing, Touring Body

At the same time, and in contrast to the partying described above, our research has found that performance-focused athletes at the Masters Games seem to resent the idea that Masters sport is 'just for fun' (Dionigi 2010b, 2008). They go to some lengths to emphasise it as 'serious competition' and distance themselves from the sport 'party-goers'. Many individual athletes at multi-sport events like the AMG and WMG have expressed that the latter group are primarily from team sports and 'not *real* athletes'. However, we have found that athletes from both individual sports and team sports equally describe the 'killer instinct' or 'white line fever' that takes over their bodies and minds once they hit the sporting track or field. For example, women from the State Vet's hockey said: 'I enjoy the competitive side because I like winning' (52 years); and 'I am a pretty

competitive person. I enjoy it but like to win' (54 years; Dionigi 2008; Litchfield and Dionigi 2011, 2012; Dionigi et al. 2012). At the track and field stadia during the WMG, AMG and the Pan Pacs, many middle-aged individuals were observed using the latest sporting equipment and accessories, such as starting blocks and spikes, and were seen wearing brightly-coloured, scant, tight sporting apparel similar to what one would witness at the Olympics.

Individual events, such as track and field, swimming and golf, at the WMG, AMG and Pan Pacs, and certain team events (netball and basketball), were professionally officiated and organised. Athletes in individual events were seen warming up from 30 minutes to over an hour on the outskirts of athletic stadia, courts, pools or golf ranges and/or at specific venues set aside for event preparation. These participants were usually on their own, rarely seen interacting with others. The stands at swimming and athletic events were full of spectators, who primarily appeared to be family members of the participants as they were heard cheering 'Go Grand-dad' or 'Go Mum'! Personal best performances and winning were valued by participants at the AMG, WMG and Pan Pacs as swimmers, runners and throwers were overheard discussing their times or distances with each other. The results table and scoreboards at the athletic and swimming events were the most crowded locations onsite, as participants eagerly looked up their times, distances and/or placings after their performances. If finishing in the top three, participants either proceeded to collect their medal from the medal table (swimming at the Pan Pacs) or were presented with it at a ceremony (AMG and WMG). At the Pan Pacs there was a medal engraving service (\$10 each) and a massage table onsite at the swimming and athletics (\$10 for 10 minutes or \$20 for 20 minute massage). These commercial services were noticeably absent from most team sport event locations at these Games, as were the crowds and individual warm-up routines. In addition, the athletic wear, swimming costumes, tracksuits and sporting shoes being sold at the registration area for the Pan Pacs Games (described in the opening quote of this chapter) were targeting these performance-oriented athletes and such sports apparel stands were set up at their competition sites.

Market engagement and affluence certainly played a key role in the exclusive nature of the performance-orientated subculture. This financial exclusivity was pronounced at the Pan Pacs where the entry costs alone for the individual golf event was AUD\$225. Chelsea shares her reflections and experiences of the cost to play golf at the Pan Pacs:

The sport of golf is not cheap. Good golf clubs cost in excess of \$1500, golf shoes cost over \$100, golf hats, shirts and clothing a further \$200 minimum. Many of the golfers who attended the Pan Pacs event also had range finders (to work out the distance between their ball and the green), which cost over \$200. Additionally, the costs to play one round of golf can often balloon out, particularly around a golf course with lots of water hazards. Sometimes players will go through three or four balls a round, and will usually only use the best golf balls, which cost around \$8 each. During each round in the Pan Pacs event, a food van travelled around and sold food. Many of the participants purchased sandwiches, sweets and fruit during their rounds. Before or after the round of golf, lunch was often shared with the playing group, so the cost of a meal is included in the day's costs. Once golf gloves, golf tees and markers are added in the expenses for the day, golf is without a doubt expensive and exclusive.

Not only do athletes spend money on sport-related goods, many of them see their Masters Games participation as part of a larger holiday. Participants expressed willingness to spend their money on travel, visiting tourist destinations and accommodation, which is highly encouraged in the promotion of such events.

In the case of Masters sport, corporations are invited by sporting organisations to expand their markets and take advantage of the growing numbers of middle-aged and older people with disposable income. What appears notable about the Masters movement is 'the timing of corporate sponsorship relative to the program's initiation' (Hastings et al. 2005: 135). Hastings et al. (2005: 152) argue, 'Capital flourishes where the fields are already plowed and sown by someone else'. For example, the 2014 Pan Pacs was held on the Gold Coast in Queensland (QLD), Australia. It was sponsored by 'Jupiters Hotel and Casino' and the event organisers invited tourist and sporting companies to promote themselves

and sell their products at the event. Such relationships are symbiotic in a Masters sport context, as explained below in reference to Masters swimming:

The expansion of participants and spectators created a lucrative market for expensive sportswear and sports productions and made commodification possible with relatively low capital risks. The benefits were mutual: corporations profited through sales and the [sport] community reaped the rewards of legitimacy for the sport program. (Hastings et al. 2005: 151)

This growing commercial interest was strikingly clear across the three welcome messages in the *2014 Pan Pacific Masters Games Handbook*, which emphasised tourism, entertainment and participant spending:

I hope those visiting the Gold Coast for the Games take the time to stay on and discover the many tourism experiences on offer across what is a truly Famous for Fun holiday destination. (QLD Minister for Tourism: 2)

Take the chance to indulge in exceptional entertainment and dining opportunities nearby, as well as the Gold Coast's spectacular coastline, iconic rainforests and leisure activities...I hope you get the chance to experience some of the highlights of our one-of-a-kind city. (Mayor of the Gold Coast: 2)

Our entertainment and other social programs are second-to-none and a major part of our on-going success. (Chairman of Events Management QLD: 2)

While many Masters athletes take advantage of the related social program and entertainment as exemplified by the party-goers above, many other Masters Games' participants talk about where they are going after they finish competing or what tours they have been on while they were attending the games. For example, at the Pan Pacs participants were observed going to the Gold Coast theme parks and at the 2009 WMG in Sydney participants recounted their experience of climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Many AMG runners and cyclists who had travelled internationally to compete at other events explained that those competitions were part of a tour of Europe that they had arranged for themselves. At the Pan Pacs,

while some golfers described trips that were only about golf, many other participants said they planned a holiday around the major sporting event, such as travelling across parts of Australia or internationally. Travel, sight-seeing and companionship have been recognised as an important part of sports participation in middle and later life (Dionigi 2008). Our point is, however, that these participants have the leisure time, health status and funds available to support such a privileged lifestyle and the market is taking advantage of this truth.

In recognition of this new market of sport tourism, small businesses to accommodate sports participation and travel are emerging. For example, a self-proclaimed comedian and businessman, Kevin, has created Kev's Sports Tours to assist individual athletes who want to go to these Masters Games events as part of a group (<http://kstours.com.au>). The following mission statement is found on Kev's website:

'Hold your feet on the ground but reach for the stars.'

From **World Masters Games events** to beautiful **Golfing Tours**, Kevs Sports Tours can fulfil any travel requirement. Our mission is to actively promote and support the growth of Masters Sports both regionally and Internationally in order to improve the fitness and health of the Over 35 demographic and to help sustain the benefits in terms of tourism and International camaraderie.

Despite the enjoyable and worthwhile experience many people may have as part of Kev's tours, the above is a stark example of how the 'Sport For All ages' message is being used as a strategy for marketing and/or taking advantage of certain groups of the population, in this case active, financially comfortable retirees. In addition, at various Masters events, there were Games merchandise stands set up at event sites, such as hockey grounds, netball courts, athletic stadia and poolside. A lot of middle-aged and older athletes were seen wearing purchased merchandise including hats and t-shirts. Merchandise was also heavily advertised via email leading up to each event, as well as during and after these events. For example, after the Pan Pacs event (which was held in late October–early November) emails were sent to all registered participants which included special discounts on merchandise, with one Pan Pacs-related email message suggesting that a discounted Pan Pacs shirt, hat or bag would make a great Christmas gift.

Manifestations of Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Sport for All Through Marketisation

Despite the focus on tourism and participant spending on merchandise, sports apparel and entertainment, sport participation was briefly mentioned in each of the above Pan Pacs Games' handbook messages. However, its mention was primarily in regard to large participant numbers, state-of-the-art sporting facilities and dedicated volunteers. Nevertheless, the Mayor's message did link the event to 'Healthy Lifestyles' and a 'Sport for All' philosophy: 'Athletes of all sports and levels are at home in our well-equipped, friendly city—from elite competitors to those seeking a healthier lifestyle' (p. 2). Correspondingly, Ryan and Trauer argue that, 'The third reason for the extension of the Masters games programme lies in the wish to facilitate participation across all age groups and levels of fitness in the belief that active participation is beneficial to older members of society' (2005: 178). As we were writing this chapter, an email landed in the first author's inbox with the following subject line: 'Your New Years Resolution: The Americas Masters Games'. The body of the email began with the following:

Hi Rylee, The first-ever Americas Masters Games is taking place in the spectacular city of Vancouver.

Celebrating 'sport for all', participants from a variety of skill sets and ages come together in the name of healthy living to compete, socialize, and conquer personal goals. With 25 official sporting events, there is something for everybody, including you!

In light of the findings we have presented in this chapter, it is important to take stock of this 'Sport for All = Healthy Living' orthodoxy.

The Masters Games are promoted as part of the health and fitness, 'Sport For All', mantra. We have provided evidence of the various manifestations of public health policy in action within the commercialised Masters sport context. The reality is that the practices of the sport party-goers make it difficult for Masters Games' promoters and stakeholders to claim that Masters event participants are 'healthier' than anyone else in

the adult population. In addition, the economic exclusivity of the performance-oriented athletes and sport travellers contradict the inclusive Sport for All discourse. The performance-orientated athlete and the sport traveller sub-cultures were clearly dominated by the financially comfortable middle-class groups who were fit to perform and travel, as well as pay for accommodation, sports clothing and equipment and tourist attractions. These latter groups see Masters sport as part of an already-active lifestyle. Therefore, regardless of Masters sport's benefits and how sport is promoted, it is often a place where like-minded, middle-class, active people gather to party, play and/or purchase, which has created and expanded market niches that value particular ways of ageing.

In contemporary Western society, the ageing body has become known as something that can be continually worked on and managed until death (Bauman 2005), not only for the good of oneself, but for the good of society. This shift has contributed to middle-aged and older people becoming the valued targets of anti-ageing products, markets and services that promote youthfulness, consumerism and active living under the banner of 'Sport for All', 'Active Ageing' or 'Healthy Lifestyles' (Gilleard and Higgs 2000, 2013). In particular:

Ageless athletic activity is more than a deliberate tactic of seeking distinction and power through 'age resistance'. It is part of a broader social response to the changing balance between work and leisure, reflecting what Bauman has characterised as a shift from a society of producers to a society of consumers. (Gilleard and Higgs 2013: 141)

On the one hand it appears that today's middle-agers, who were the focus of this chapter, are an embodiment of Sport for All promotion policies and consumer markets that aim to challenge traditional views of ageing, as well as see individuals as capable of controlling their health and bodies through their lifestyle and consumer choices. On the other hand, if individuals are expected to be consumers, exert control of their own ageing and embody the moral imperative not to become old (Bauman 2000; Jones and Higgs 2010) then 'This moves the idea of health in later life away from the concerns of health and social policy and towards a further engagement with consumer markets', (Gilleard and Higgs 2013: 138).

Concluding Thoughts

Sport, exercise and physical activity are now promoted to all and, over time, have become more individualised, commercialised and integrated 'into the broader 'lifestyles' of those no longer young' (Gilleard and Higgs 2013: 143). Collectively, the findings presented in this chapter describe how participants are leading a highly leisured, active and social lifestyle. At the same time, our findings on the sub-cultures at the Masters Games raise fundamental questions about risks, equity and access. Ultimately, the sport party-goer, performance-oriented athlete and sport traveller sub-cultures appear to represent the death of the Sport for All ideal that founded the Masters movement. Or, at the very least, they are symptomatic of the evolving nature of this phenomenon in a capitalist society.

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16

Outdoor Adventurous Sport: For All Ages?

Elizabeth C.J. Pike

Deficit, Heroic and Everyday Experiences of Ageing

The focus of this chapter is on the experiences of older adults who choose to become involved in outdoor adventurous sporting activities in later life, giving particular consideration to the ways in which age affects the way that people think about sport and the impact of such activities in later life. Activities such as mountaineering and watersports in open water are generally undertaken in the natural outdoor environment and are associated with a degree of risk-taking (Collins and Collins 2012). When older people participate in such activities it may be seen to subvert the traditional ‘deficit’ model of ageing that growing old is a period of inevitable decline, dominated by the experience of deficits, diseases and other age-related problems that require interventions and treatment. In response to the deficit model of ageing, there has been a movement

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towards a more positive view that ageing can be associated with a pleasurable lifestyle, including engagement in a range of activities in later life. This shift has been defined as a ‘heroic’ model of ageing, which defines ageing as something to be fought and defeated, while conversely giving into ageing is regarded as a failure.

However, neither the deficit nor the heroic model of ageing fully reflects the views and experiences of older people (Reed et al. 2003), and both views are ageist (see Dionigi 2008). Nevertheless, these models continue to inform much of the research and policy agendas that affect the lives of older people. Indeed, social scientists are increasingly arguing that these perspectives are used as a strategy for marketing and/or regulating certain groups of the population, including financially comfortable retirees, and may marginalise those who adopt alternative styles of ageing (see Gard et al. 2017 and Dionigi and Litchfield, this volume). In this chapter, I respond to the proposal that we should pay more attention to ageing in ways that are meaningful to the individual or what has been described as ‘authentic ageing’ (see Biggs 2004; Ranzijn 2010), drawing on Bourdieu’s (1986a) concept of capital and the work of Erving Goffman (1959) and his conceptualisation of the development and display of character. In particular, I argue that engagement in outdoor adventurous activities should not be understood solely as something ‘brave’ or ‘heroic’, but rather that these are part of what I refer to as ‘everyday ageing’ for those who choose to participate in them, a point I will develop later in the chapter as I tell Robert’s story.

The heroic model of ageing, which claims that people can engage in a whole range of activities into later life, has the potential to exacerbate problems for the ageing population:

Positive images of older people engaged in heroic activities such as rock-climbing and wind-surfing, and displaying a determination not to ‘give in’ to ageing, may provide an alternative to deficit models of growing older (and, incidentally, represent a commercial opportunity for suppliers of anti-ageing drugs and holidays). However, they leave people who are not able or do not want to be heroic with little support or recognition. (Reed et al. 2003: 1)

Such 'heroic' images of older people are also reinforced through the media. Fenton and Draper (2014) provide the example of a BBC News story which implied that ageing well means engaging in youthful, adventurous activities: 'Daphne Bernard: She is in her 90s, but remains fit and active, playing badminton and going to her local gym in Eastbourne every week. Last year she did a 12,000 ft tandem skydive for charity' (Triggle 2013). There are now specialist magazines targeting 'Third Aged' and selling active lifestyles through articles with titles such as 'Take a Jump! You Can Parachute At Any Age' (*Good Times* cited in Blaikie 1999: 74). However, the research of Fenton and Draper (2014) identifies that many older people find this kind of portrayal of 'positive ageing', with the emphasis on youthfulness, as unhelpful and even deplorable. Furthermore, it is important to be aware that, regardless of sport's potential benefits and how it is promoted, such activities are often enjoyed by like-minded, middle-class, already active people. That is, it may not necessarily offer an attractive lifestyle option to people from other demographical sectors of the older population (as shown in most of the chapters in this edited volume).

It is the purpose of this chapter to move away from a model that suggests it is necessary to be brave to cope with an inevitable aspect of the life course, and to give voice to the experiences of those who do not want to be perceived as heroic, but still engage in outdoor adventurous activities as a meaningful part of their everyday life. To ensure that our understanding of ageing is informed by older people themselves, in this chapter I draw on a case study of a 75-year-old male participant in outdoor adventurous activities with whom I undertook an extended semi-structured interview and participant observation. For the purpose of this chapter, he will be referred to by the pseudonym Robert. The themes which provided the framework for the case study were informed by previous studies undertaken with other older people who also engaged in similar pursuits (Pike 2012; Pike and Weinstock 2013), and I will cross-refer to findings from these studies in what follows. This approach provides reasonable confidence that the issues explored are those that are meaningful to the older adults themselves (see Reed et al. 2003).

Traditional Outdoor Adventure Sports

Before considering these lived experiences from my research participants, it is important to provide some context to the development of outdoor adventurous sporting activities. Many of these activities developed during the late 1800s and early 1900s informed by the dominant developmental theory that such activities would enhance the physical growth and character development of young people (Cook 2001). In contrast, older people were discouraged from engaging in adventurous sports due to a widespread perception that ageing bodies are frail and would be overstressed by these events (Coakley and Pike 2014), with such activities deemed inappropriate 'at your age' (Laventure 2007). Robert told me that, for him, the age-related changes in his body were 'just one of those things, you get old, you slow down, things pack up'. However, for Robert, this was not the reason to avoid engagement in such activities, although he did experience other limiting factors, such as time, money and social support, as will be explained later. As a result, while some outdoor adventurous activities have challenged the participation trends witnessed in more traditional sporting activities, most have been predominantly undertaken by the young, middle-class, white, able-bodied males who also dominate traditional competitive sports (see Wheaton 2004), and older people have often felt marginalised and unable to readily access these opportunities (see Pike and Weinstock 2013).

A sense of exclusion from full involvement in social life is experienced more widely among older people than the specific issue of marginalisation from sporting activities. For example, an older woman interviewed by Reed et al. (2003) described how growing older involves a number of difficulties with insufficient support for those who want to enjoy their later life. It may be helpful to understand this marginalisation by drawing on Bourdieu's (1986a) concept of capital.¹ For Robert, economic capital provided particular constraints to his involvement in adventurous activities and he identified specific barriers of 'money and time':

Doing so much of the same thing all this time, you're not progressing any further, and if you want to progress further you've got to go on courses and that can cost money, so you have to say 'alright, I'm now retired, there's a limit to what I spend'.

Furthermore, there are the limits of dwindling social capital, or the networks of people that provide tangible advantages, including the mutual support necessary to continue engagement in an active lifestyle. As Robert told me, this lack of social capital limited his involvement in activities that require more than one participant: 'I can't get a team together Trying to find people to go with. I find people are not reliable these days to do things with I don't try to persuade people any more. I've given up on them'. It is important to recognise that engagement in outdoor adventurous activities offers challenges such as those explained by Robert but, in what follows, I will focus on the potential benefits of outdoor adventurous activities for older adults as informed by the stories of Robert and other older participants. Telling these stories is important given that policies and provision for physical activity are being planned in the context of significant demographic changes and a shift to an ageing population, but that the experiences and perspectives of older people are not always considered in the planning process (see Reed et al. 2003).

Contemporary Trends in Outdoor Adventure and Everyday Ageing

As we witness increased life expectancy in most countries, there is growing evidence that many older people are seeking meaningful ways to fill the time in the years following formal employment or other responsibilities including a variety of sports. In particular, as older people are encouraged to age 'actively' for health and social benefits, many appear to be attracted to social and inclusive activities that emphasise health, fitness and cooperation (including outdoor adventurous sporting activities), rather than traditional sporting activities which feature competition and physical force (Pike and Weinstock 2013).

Robert explained that he enjoyed participating in activities such as climbing and kayaking because 'they're challenging' and it means 'being outside in that lovely sunshine'. In an earlier study that I conducted with 'wild swimmers', the participants choose to swim in natural outdoor waters including rivers, lakes and the sea, often in conditions that are challenging due to tides, currents or cold (Pike 2012). The lifestyles of Robert and these swimmers contrast with the more usual perception that

older people are frail, dependent and socially isolated. For example, one male, aged 64, interviewed in the study of wild swimmers explained:

My friends and family take it for granted that I go swimming and know it is a significant part of my life. They are interested and amused at the odd places I have found to swim in when on holiday [e.g. every ocean I've visited from the tropics to the arctic, remote rivers and lakes]. (see Pike 2012: 499)

For many older people, engagement in outdoor adventure has been a consistent feature of their life course. Robert described how his childhood had involved several periods of relocation during a short time frame which meant he attended multiple schools, eventually leaving formal education at the age of 14. From what he described as a 'disruptive life', with little sense of a stable home or social networks, he became involved with the Scout Movement, the Boys' Brigade and then entered National Service. It was as a result of these experiences that he was introduced to outdoor adventurous sporting activities which became a focal point of his life henceforward. An outdoor educator (aged 70) similarly told me that he had always been involved in outdoor adventure and described such activities as 'ageless', since in the outdoors the age of the participant is secondary to the shared pleasure from the activities and environment (see Pike and Weinstock 2013). Of course, there are others who have not been engaged in outdoor activities from an early age, in some cases indicating that they became involved with outdoor adventure by way of reflecting on their sense of self and having a desire to redefine themselves as a more adventurous type of person in later life. These decisions to get active can be encouraged by significant others, such as the 'interested' and 'amused' friends and relatives of our wild swimmer mentioned above.

Furthermore, there are also companies targeting the ageing adventurer. For example, one relatively recent trend has been the increasing numbers of 'grown up gappers': older people who are taking career breaks during which they travel overseas and engage in adventurous activities that are more usually associated with teenagers on a 'gap year'.² An industry has now developed to meet the needs of older adventurers such as the Travellers Worldwide agency which targets older people to undertake

volunteer opportunities with a statement on their website that 'If you've always thought that gap years and volunteering are for the 18 year olds out there, think again' (Travellers Worldwide 2012). Such is the demand for adventurous activities in later life that, in 2013 in the UK, a Parliamentary Group on Adventure and Recreation in Society (ARISc) was re-formed, including in its remit the promotion of adventure sports and engaging older people.

ARISc was supported by Andrew Denton, Chief Executive of the Outdoor Industries Association, who confirmed the commercial value of such activities in a statement that:

Adventure isn't just taking a risk or a state of mind, it is a £20 bn economy that underpins UK tourism, contributes to wellness and the nation's state of mind, for instance helping fight the battle against obesity and inactivity. Adventure, just getting active outdoors, is an easily accessible and integrated solution for many of the nation's issues. (Denton 2013)

I have argued elsewhere (see Pike 2011) that such perceived benefits of exercise for older people stated in this way as a scientific 'fact' and a 'solution' to social ills are concerning in their simplicity. Such messages also reinforce neoliberal discourses which emphasise individual responsibility for active lifestyles and overlook the broader social constraints I outlined above, such as access to various forms of capital. Furthermore, increased commodification of outdoor adventurous activities could undermine their potential to offer an alternative to traditional sporting activities, if they are to become more highly organised, structured and costly. However, Robert was in favour of actively recruiting older people to outdoor activities through the media, proposing a media campaign using the phrase: 'Are you bored? Why are you bored? How would you like to do something challenging with your life?'

In contrast to other sporting activities which take place in the 'safer' spaces of rule-bound activities within controlled environments, and which might normally be associated with ageing bodies (Bhatti 2006), outdoor adventurous activities may be a sign of the 'agelessness' described by the 70-year-old outdoor educator in Pike and Weinstock (2013: 130), who continued to explain that 'in here [pointing at his head], I'm still 17.

Why should age make a difference to what I do?’ One 64-year-old wild swimmer was keen to distinguish the activities that he did in the sea from older people whose involvement with the sea is related to travel on holiday cruises, describing his involvement ‘in sea and rough water activities. I still enjoy going in the sea (but definitely not any sort of cruising!)’. In the next section, I will consider the ways in which engagement in these activities may be part of the display of an alternative personal identity or character that disrupts traditional deficit and heroic views of ageing.

Everyday Ageing and the Display of Character

Engagement in outdoor adventurous sporting activities in later life may enable participants to demonstrate what Erving Goffman (1967) described as ‘elements of character’. Goffman argued that the development of character is predicated upon degrees of sacrifice and risk. To understand this, we need firstly to consider the basis of this perception of danger and risk. Risk is generally defined in terms of uncertainty and lack of control regarding the outcomes of an activity, such as that experienced during participation in outdoor adventurous sporting activities. Risk can create anxiety and/or also be central to the experience of pleasurable emotions. Robert described the influence of other people in creating a perception of risk: ‘When you speak to people who are advising you on how to do this, how to do that, it starts to bring in the element of fear that I’m putting my life in danger’. He went on to explain that he felt ‘I am losing my nerve a bit with various parts of the activities ... maybe it’s not losing nerve, maybe it’s balance. As you get older, so your balance goes’.

It is possible for individuals to experience a sense of stigma when they no longer feel able to present the self that they have always been (youthful, healthy, fit), and the actual image that they now portray (not being able to move easily, loss of balance) is someway from this idealised self. Goffman (1963) used the term ‘stigma’ to describe how human interactions may be challenged if an individual does not look or behave in a way that conforms to socially desirable norms. This process of stigmatisation has the capacity to structure common perceptions of older people and stifle the possibilities of creative cultural living in later life. The title of

Goffman's (1959) seminal text 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' returns us to this notion of 'everyday ageing', that ageing does not have to be experienced as a deficit or as heroic, but an everyday sense of acceptance of who one is. As Goffman later explains, 'The painfulness of sudden stigmatisation can come not from the individual's confusion about his identity, but from knowing too well what he has become' (Goffman 1963: 133). Following Bourdieu (1986b), this may be understood as an ageing habitus, where one begins to acquire a particular cultural capital which involves learning what is regarded as appropriate and desirable behaviour for an older person (see Dumas et al. 2005; Vertinsky and O'Brien Cousins 2007).

According to Goffman (1967), the development of character occurs when a person perceives danger in a situation, but proceeds regardless of the risk. This is an indication that they have what Goffman termed courage. As we have seen in this chapter, Robert was aware of the increasing limitations of his body and expected behaviour but, at the time of interview, was proceeding with the activities regardless, or indeed because of, the perception of risk. As he explained: 'I don't do "risky things" now. Life's a risk. Every day is a risk'. The next stage in understanding the development of character in outdoor adventurous activities is regarded as gameness (Goffman 1967). This occurs if an individual recognises, but still takes, perceived risks, suffers a setback (whether physical, social or emotional), yet continues the activity with a full display of effort. Robert explained that despite feeling a loss of nerve and/or balance, he would 'still climb up that wall without a rope' and to him climbing without safety harnesses was 'like walking down the road, you get so used to it'.

When older people display courage and gameness, they are able to redefine themselves as someone other than a vulnerable 'old person', and such activities may even be a conscious display of a youthful risk-taking persona that challenges perceived limitations and vulnerability of the ageing body. For example, Robert said that his wife thinks 'I'm stupid, I go rock climbing, "it's stupid"', while one of the wild swimmers in Pike (2012: 499) described how, as a 60-year-old woman, her non-swimming friends thought she was 'utterly mad, doing all this exercising', but she continued with the activity regardless. Another, 65-year-old male wild swimmer explained how his friends 'think I'm a bit mad to go swimming

in lakes and the sea particularly in this country', but he could not imagine ever giving up his sport (see Pike 2012). Similarly, Robert said that the only thing that would make him give up his activities would be 'when I'm not agile, when I start to get stiff and can't walk any further'.

Engagement in outdoor adventure may also be seen as a means of 'impression management' (Goffman 1959), with older people literally managing their impression of themselves as a means of getting people to see them differently. Take, for example, Robert's description of kayaking out at sea with another older male friend, which was witnessed by his son and friends:

My son and his mates saw two little boats way out in the distance, and my son said 'was that you Dad, you were miles out?' It wasn't that far out. But he was very impressed, the fact that I was way out there. My daughter takes it on board now, that it's just what I do.

The above may be illustrative of what has been described as 'sageing' (de Rozario 1998), which is a recognition and respect that people develop across the life course for their life experience, wisdom and abilities. I also heard the story of another older swimmer who was a leg amputee:

I swim with a friend in the sea, it is an activity where my disability is not a disadvantage, and it is always good to keep fit. I tend to train with slightly younger able-bodied people who I can compete with and sometimes beat. While exercising I enjoy the challenge and feel good working hard, I like to keep fit and trim (harder with the years) in my circumstances I cannot afford to put too much weight on. I really enjoy swimming, it is the freedom of not having to wear an uncomfortable restrictive false leg and not being at a disadvantage. (male, age 60, see Pike 2012: 502)

These stories illustrate how it is possible to fend off the external appearance of an ageing (and disabled) body, and explore what, for them, is their 'true' everyday fit and able self beneath the exterior (Goffman 1963, 1969). The involvement in sea kayaking and wild swimming enables these men to redefine themselves as an outdoor adventure participant, rather than an ageing parent or older disabled person.

Despite some of the positive stories told above, an unintended consequence of increased numbers of older people engaging in such activities is a recorded increase in the number of accidents and injuries related to outdoor adventure among older people. For example, Robert described how ‘I have slowed down in the last ten years’, but that a recent ice climbing trip was ‘a bit on the dangerous side’ and ‘very strenuous on my ankles’, and that he had been in trouble for climbing without safety ropes while with some children: ‘I wouldn’t ask the kids to do what I do, but I like free climbing, it gets your adrenaline going’. A survey of sports injuries in Europe in 2012 found that, while there are less injuries in ‘traditional’ sports among people aged over 60 compared to other age groups, the 60 and over group is disproportionately involved in fatal riding, bicycling, boating and mountaineering accidents (Kissler and Bauer 2012). This trend has been described as ‘boomeritis’ by way of indicating that some members of the ‘baby boom’ generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) have increasingly active lifestyles which are now leading to consequences such as this (DiNubile 2017). Similarly, a report in 2010 indicated that injury claims made by Britons over the age of 70 from sports such as scuba diving, mountaineering and skiing had increased from five per cent of total claims in 2006 to nearly 20 per cent in 2010. These trends are no doubt at least partially related to the increasing numbers of older people undertaking such activities due to longer life expectancy and increased social acceptability of such activities. Such evidence provides an interesting example of the ‘messiness’ of public health discourse: on the one hand, Robert and others like him are the embodiment of healthy ageing messages as they engage in regular exercise; but, on the other hand, they are taking risks and becoming injured as is the case in many high performance sports (see Coakley and Pike 2014). It seems that people like Robert make the decision to engage in outdoor adventurous activities because they offer exercise in an alternative mode to traditional, competitive, rule-bound sports; however, the consequences of exercising in such uncontrolled environments carries similar health risks to their institutionalised, competitive counterparts.

Furthermore, I have discussed elsewhere how the high reportage of injuries in later life can also contribute to negative stereotypes of older persons and their (in)ability to safely engage in outdoor adventure

(see Pike and Weinstock 2013). Richard Doubleday, the director of Sport at Perkins Slade (a large British insurance broker that offers advice and cover for companies including sports organisations) reinforced the perception of the fragility of the ageing body and questioned the appropriateness of older people engaging in adventurous sports, in a statement that: ‘While older people may think they are capable of taking risks with their bodies, the reality is that they are more vulnerable’ (Perkins Slade 2012). It is also the case that older people may have to pay higher prices for insurance or may not be able to gain insurance at all, presenting a further barrier to outdoor adventure sport participation.

Concluding Thoughts

The story of Robert and of the other participants referenced in this chapter provide compelling narratives of the benefits of engagement in outdoor adventurous activities in later life. However, their stories are set against a backdrop of limited support and investment in such activities for older people, with a common perception that ageing bodies may be too frail to take such risks, and that it takes a certain amount of ‘character’ to pursue these activities and gain the perceived benefits. I have argued that traditional models which understand ageing as a ‘deficit’, or that older people engaging in outdoor adventurous sporting activities are ‘heroic’, are not necessarily meaningful or helpful when considering the provision of physical activities for the increasing numbers of an ageing population.

Older people already experience constraints related to economic, social and cultural capital which impact on their involvement in outdoor adventurous activities. In order to fully understand these constraints, and the value of improving access to these activities, the chapter recommends a greater need for the voice of the older person to be heard in the planning process. This is a key message for policymakers and providers because outdoor adventurous activities present opportunities to challenge traditional views of ageing, improve social networks and address the social isolation that many experience in later life. These activities also already provide the foundations for a lucrative economy; however, further

commodification of outdoor adventure for older people should be carefully weighed against the possibility of losing the appeal of activities which offer a genuine alternative to institutionalised competitive sports. In many ways, social policy needs to catch up with the desires of members of the older population who want risk and adventure, and recognise, and support the needs of these people as much as the social policies that target those who adopt other ways of ageing. To conclude in the words of Robert, engagement in outdoor adventurous activities should be recognised as a valued lifestyle choice as part of everyday ageing: ‘do something challenging with your life ... it gets the adrenaline going!’

Notes

1. Bourdieu (1986a) outlines four kinds of capital, which are resources that enable individuals to influence specific situations: economic capital (ownership of goods with financial value), cultural capital (knowledge and skills), social capital (social networks) and symbolic capital (the conversion of other forms of capital into celebrity status and reputation).
2. A gap year is a year's break, usually taken between finishing school and starting university, although sometimes taken as a career break, during which people generally travel and undertake voluntary work.

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17

Sport, Physical Activity, and Aging: Are We on the Right Track?

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and Sean Horton

This chapter provides a critical overview of the applicability and effectiveness of the ‘Sport for Life’ and ‘Sport for All’ approaches in achieving ‘success’ during older adulthood. Older adulthood, as suggested by the World Health Organization (WHO), commonly coincides with the eligibility to collect pension payments, and thus begins between 60 and 65 years of age (WHO 2002a). As many parts of the world face a demographic shift toward this older population base, a critical examination of strategies to maintain health, function, and well-being into later life is warranted. Positioned within a framework of successful aging, this chapter discusses the implications of holding the individual accountable for personal health and functioning, while aligning this notion with the expectation of all individuals to maintain physically active lives through sport participation. As an example of older adults participating in sport

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we highlight the World Masters Games and debate the use of competitive Masters athletes to exemplify the aging ideal, as well as serve as role models for the senior population. We consider barriers to sport and physical activity participation and provide a snapshot of engagement profiles throughout older adulthood. Conclusions are drawn regarding 'Sport for Life' and 'Sport for All' approaches when encouraging older adults to age successfully, and contrasts are made to the broader framework of active aging.

Successful Aging

Among the myriad of definitions used to describe successful aging, Rowe and Kahn's (1997, 1987) theoretically derived model remains a heavily cited and easily understood conceptualization. Thus, it is not surprising that this model of successful aging has gained prominence within a variety of forums in which the aging process is discussed. Rowe and Kahn proposed a three-tier hierarchy of successful aging which presupposes that in order to achieve 'success' during the aging process one must (1) avoid disease and disability to ensure (2) high physical and cognitive functioning, which in turn supports (3) the maintenance of an active engagement in life (Rowe and Kahn 1997). Within each of the hierarchical components, Rowe and Kahn (1997) identified subparts. For example, the absence of disease and disability also includes the presence or absence of health-related risk factors, while the maintenance of physical and cognitive capacity reflects an individual's *potential* for activity, not simply the functional capacity currently utilized, and finally, an active engagement in life includes interpersonal relationships, as well as participation in productive activities (Rowe and Kahn 1997). Taken together, successful aging is represented most completely at the point of interaction between these three components (and subparts) devised by Rowe and Kahn (1997). While not without criticism for its overly biomedical approach and lack of acknowledgment of structural factors and societal influences (Katz and Calasanti 2015; Martin and Gillen 2013; Strawbridge et al. 2002), Rowe and Kahn's model dominates the literature on successful aging.

At the heart of this model is the individual, responsible for one's personal ability to age successfully. Specifically, the authors noted that lifestyle, personal habits, dietary intake, and psychosocial and environmental influences are modifiable factors, external to the usual aging process, that significantly impact one's success in later life (Rowe and Kahn 1997). As such, they assumed that the individual can be held accountable for their health, as well as their attainment of successful aging. Lifestyle choice within the successful aging framework has been limited to the concept of health promotion and health-relevant choices (e.g., smoking, diet, and physical activity), without an analysis of how lifestyle choice is embedded within social factors such as status differences, healthy outcomes, or accumulated advantage (Katz 2013). Without these critical perspectives it is difficult to ascertain who may have access to health benefits and services, and therefore have the ability to frame their health behaviors within positive lifestyle outcomes (Katz and Calasanti 2015).

While the adoption of certain lifestyle choices has the potential to mitigate losses associated with the usual aging process, there exists a certain naivety within the view that an individual is therefore responsible for the occurrence of disease and/or disability. A certain degree of disease and disability is likely inevitable for the majority of older adults, with such unavoidable circumstances creating important implications. For instance, when an individual is confronted with illness, Rowe and Kahn's conceptualization of successful aging indicates that the upper levels of the hierarchy are unattainable, thus ceasing one's ability to age successfully. Therefore, this model of successful aging results in dichotomizing older adults as 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' based on the achievement of the three proposed hierarchical components. While the use of such a clearly defined variable may be appealing to researchers, its ability to reflect reality is questionable, as the attainment of 'success' likely exceeds its theoretical conceptualizations. Consequently, since the publication of Rowe and Kahn's seminal work, the depiction of successful aging has evolved into a continuum where it is possible to achieve varying levels and forms of success. This approach more aptly blends the theoretical conceptualizations and personal perceptions of successful aging that currently dominate the literature (Baker et al. 2009; Bowling and Dieppe 2005; Martin and Gillen 2013; Young et al. 2009).

A limitation of Rowe and Kahn's model is the disconnect between its hierarchical depiction of successful aging and the meaning older adults ascribe to aging. Subsequent research has indicated that incorporating the older adult's perspective is critical to understanding the complexity of later life. In these studies, older adults identified themselves as aging successfully regardless of the presence of disease and disability, and/or limited functional ability (see Liffiton et al. 2012 for a review; Montross et al. 2006; Strawbridge et al. 2002). As a clear contradiction to the theoretically derived model proposed by Rowe and Kahn (1997), it lends support to the literature that suggests a greater percentage of older adults will be labeled as 'successful' through self-identification (Strawbridge et al. 2002; von Faber et al. 2001). This finding provides evidence of a separation between theoretical models of successful aging and lay ideas. Such a contrast is likely a function of the limited scope that constitutes theoretical conceptualizations, leading to a lack of social relevance, as they do not include the broad perspective of lay-based definitions (Bowling 2007; Phelan and Larson 2002). For example, while older adults recognize the importance of physical and cognitive abilities in relation to aging successfully, it is often acknowledged in light of one's ability to maintain psychosocial functioning (Reichstadt et al. 2010). In an attempt to highlight the multidimensional nature of lay-based views, common psychological and social factors that older adults identify in relation to successful aging have been outlined in Table 17.1. Beyond these factors, older adults also perceive the ability to age successfully as being influenced by finances (Bowling 2006; Hilton et al. 2012; Lee and Fan 2008), independence (Hilton et al. 2012; Knight and Ricciardelli 2003; Matsubayashi and Okumiya 2006; Tate et al. 2003), longevity (Knight and Ricciardelli 2003), and adaptation (Matsubayashi and Okumiya 2006; Tate et al. 2003; von Faber et al. 2001).

Evidently, older adults do not readily subscribe to the rigid, empirically conceived frameworks of successful aging that are put forth within the academic literature. Instead, the aging population often embraces a multidimensional approach to successful aging that is adaptive and flexible in nature. Thus, understanding successful aging may be dependent on the nature of the measurement (i.e., objective vs. subjective measures)

Table 17.1. Psychological and social factors identified within lay-based definitions of successful aging

Reference	Psychological health			Social health		
	Happiness/ enjoyment of life	Positive outlook on life	Personal growth	Acceptance of oneself	Social roles	Active engagement
Bowling (2006)	✓				✓	✓
Fisher and Specht (1999)			✓			
Hilton et al. (2012)		✓		✓		
Knight and Ricciardelli (2003)	✓		✓			✓
Lee and Fan (2008)						✓
Matsubayashi and Okumiya (2006)	✓					✓
Reichstadt et al. (2010)				✓		✓
Tate et al. (2003)	✓	✓		✓		✓

Close, personal relationships

being employed, which suggests that successful aging may be a multidimensional construct that exists on a continuum of success and adaptation. This is consistent with both the selection, optimization, and compensation (SOC) model proposed by Baltes and Baltes (1990) and the more recent spectrum model of aging proposed by Martin and Gillen (2013). The spectrum model takes an individualized approach to maximize growth across biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of a person's aging, incorporating both intrinsic (e.g., lifestyle) and extrinsic (e.g., resources) factors for personal success.

The concept of assigning responsibility for one's personal health is further reinforced by promotions and accompanying slogans such as Sport for Life and Sport for All. Specifically, the Canadian Sport for Life movement seeks to enhance the quality of physical activity and sport throughout Canada by focusing on sport, education, recreation, and health at a community, provincial, and national level. Overall, this movement intends to guide sport and physical activity involvement from infancy through all stages of adulthood (Canadian Sport for Life [CS4L] 2011). Similarly, the Sport for All commission identifies sport as an ideal solution for physical, mental, and social health, and emphasizes the need for sport participation regardless of age, sex, and socioeconomic status (LIKES Research Center for Sport and Health Sciences 2010). These promotions embrace an underlying attitude that suggests participation in sport is a viable means to maintain health and physical functioning for all individuals throughout all life stages. Evidently, such promotions assume that older adults can equally access and benefit from sport, and presumably use sport as a tool to 'control' the maintenance of health, avoid disease and disability, and ultimately age successfully (see Gard and Dionigi 2016). However, similar to the concept of successful aging, slogans such as Sport for Life and Sport for All are overly simplistic. Sport is a complex construct, and such promotional statements fail to account for the individualized aging process, including social, economic, and uncontrollable health issues, in relation to sport participation. While concepts such as 'successful aging' and Sport for All are well intentioned, their applicability to the aging process and the everyday lives of a wide range of older people remains debatable.

Sport in Older Adulthood

The opportunity and expectation of participation in sport and/or physical activity during older adulthood is a relatively recent phenomenon. Historically, sport has been targeted at the young, and predominantly male population, with many older Western women growing up in an era when physical activity was discouraged for the members of their gender (Dionigi 2010a; Gard et al. 2017; Vertinsky 1995). Times have changed, however, and expectations are growing for all citizens to live a physically active lifestyle regardless of age or gender. This expectation is exemplified through the recent international emphasis on Sport for All (International Olympic Committee [IOC] 2014), and the Canadian Sport for Life movement (CS4L 2011), which have been designed to improve overall health and fitness, as well as combat lifestyle patterns that have led to a supposedly ‘alarmingly’ sedentary population. Despite such international and national campaigns, participation in sport within Canada peaks in older adolescence (with 54% of individuals aged 15 to 19 years participating in sport), after which there exists a steady decrease. By the age of 55, only 17% of Canadians are engaging in sport, with participation rates in general physical activity experiencing a similar decline (Statistics Canada 2013). Evidently, campaigns such as Sport for Life have struggled to effectively increase physical activity participation and change lifestyle patterns of the older adult population. This outcome may be a reflection of the limited promotion of these campaigns directed toward older adults, as past research indicates that children, adolescents, and youth are consistently the focus of such movements (LIKES Research Center for Sport and Health Sciences 2010; see Eime and Harvey, this volume and Young and Callary, this volume). This lack of attention placed on older adults is notable considering that this demographic is the most rapidly growing segment of the population.

While it seems as if an emphasis on sport and physical activity has resulted in negligible change for older adults, it has in fact coincided with the initiation and growing popularity of Masters games events, which traditionally target athletes 30 years of age and older (Gard and Dionigi 2016; Gard et al. 2017). The World Masters Games (WMG) were first

held in Toronto in 1985, with subsequent Games typically scheduled at four-year intervals. The number of athletes has increased substantially since inception, with a record 30,000 athletes partaking in the 2009 WMG in Sydney, Australia. This makes the WMG the largest event of its kind worldwide, with approximately triple the number of athletes competing in the WMG than in the summer Olympics (Shephard 2010). Athletes involved in these games emphasize the benefits that can be obtained from sport during later life (e.g., Dionigi 2016; Dionigi et al. 2011a, 2010). For example, athletes participating in the WMG identify high levels of physical fitness and good health as points of pride stemming from their athletic involvement. Additionally, stories of empowerment often emerge from the WMG, with participants experiencing intense satisfaction from partaking in such events well past an age in which the majority of athletes compete in sport (Dionigi et al. 2010). Athletes described the joy of competing, the comradery of competition, and the fulfillment garnered from winning medals, to the point that competitive sport had become a fundamental component of their identity (Dionigi et al. 2011a, b).

The perceived benefits derived from participation in the WMG lend support for the continued emphasis on promotions such as Sport for All. From these benefits, it is understandable that Masters athletes are often held up as examples of ‘successful aging’ with some researchers suggesting that these athletes may personify an aging ideal (Geard et al. 2017; Hawkins et al. 2003). From a societal perspective, Masters athletes have the potential to challenge traditional stereotypes of aging, as well as serve as role models or ‘health exemplars’ (Lockwood et al. 2005) for other seniors and society as a whole (Horton et al. 2013). Masters athletes are often depicted positively in the media and celebrated for their accomplishments, which contrasts the traditional negative portrayals of seniors. Essentially, Masters athletes have the potential to serve as ‘stereotype busters’ by challenging the most destructive images of aging; an image of decline, decay, and loss in physical and cognitive function (Horton et al. 2008).

With the shifting population demographics, understanding the benefits of athletic involvement in older adulthood, as well as the potential societal impact of older athletes, is timely. Currently, the leading wave of

the ‘baby boom’ generation (babies born between 1946–1964 in North America) is over 70 years of age, with centenarians the fastest growing segment of the American population (Payne and Issacs 2012). The combination of an aging and sedentary population is causing concern, most notably for the potential cost to, and strain upon, health-care systems (see Gard and Dionigi 2016). Thus, sport and physical activity can be seen by the lay person as an appropriate means for older individuals to maintain health, resist an aging body, and prevent or delay disease and disability (Gilleard and Higgs 2000, 2002). However, adopting a Sport for Life or Sport for All approach necessitates caution due to the complexities inherent in negotiating the aging process, from both an individual and a societal perspective.

The Complexity of Sport in Older Adulthood

While it seems promising to use Masters athletes to exemplify the benefits of sport and physical activity involvement in later life, it is problematic to hold these athletes up as an aging ideal (see Gard et al. 2017). One such issue is the exclusive nature of Masters sport. For example, despite the growth in Masters events, participants represent only a small percentage of the senior population as a whole, and come predominately from middle to high socioeconomic groups (Dionigi et al. 2010). Considering the money that it can require to travel to these events, and the costs associated with simply playing some of these sports, the constraints to those without significant discretionary income at their disposal are substantial (see Dionigi and Litchfield, this volume).

Additional issues pertaining to portraying Masters athletes as an aging ideal may be a product of a divide that exists between Masters athletes and the general senior population, as older adults who are highly active, either recreationally or competitively, are less likely to identify themselves as a ‘typical’ senior (Horton et al. 2008). By not identifying with the general senior population, these older athletes have the propensity to simultaneously resist and reinforce aging stereotypes. Masters athletes resist stereotypes by providing an alternative image and aging profile to that which is so prevalent in society. However, older Masters athletes

concurrently reinforce negative images of aging by rejecting notions like 'old' and 'senior' in their self-descriptions, thereby subtly denigrating those terms (Dionigi 2016; Dionigi et al. 2011b, 2010). In this manner, those of the same age, but in poorer health, are positioned as the 'other' (Said 1978), resulting in words such as 'old' and 'senior' representing something different, and worse, in contrast to the relatively good health enjoyed by Masters athletes. This complex, dual influence older Masters athletes have on aging stereotypes may be related to the distinct ambivalence expressed toward these athletes' viability as role models. While Masters athletes have the potential to be good role models for older individuals who are already active, sedentary older adults (who constitute the majority of seniors) are less likely to be inspired by their example (Horton et al. 2008, 2013). Masters athletes, particularly those who compete and perform at very high levels, can be seen as unrealistic and intimidating. In fact, sedentary older adults often find Masters athletes distinctly unappealing as role models, and may be turned off exercise as a result (Horton et al. 2008, 2013; Ory et al. 2003). Similarly, even older adults who remain active in ways other than competitive sport (i.e., exercising at a gym, completing yard work) may find it difficult to identify with Masters athletes, because 'sport' likely takes on a different meaning for older adults participating in a noncompetitive environment.

The complexity surrounding older athletes' ability to function as role models and inspire sport participation in later life may stem from differing values older athletes associate with successful aging compared to those held by seniors more generally. For example, preliminary research in this area suggests that highly active seniors tend to identify with a biomedical model of successful aging, which emphasizes physical independence, while the general population of older adults is more inclined to view successful aging as a multidimensional concept that includes many psychosocial factors (Dionigi et al. 2011c). While more research is required to substantiate these early findings, these differing values constitute an important divergence in attitudes between Masters athletes and seniors more generally, which may deter viewing these athletes as influential on a personal level. Importantly, 'senior' is not a monolithic term, which adds to the inherent complexity of researching role models, or health-related exemplars, specific to older adults (Lockwood et al. 2005; Lockwood and

Kunda 1997). It also raises questions as to what type of promotional messages will actually inspire people to greater involvement in sport or physical activity, rather than turning them off exercise completely. Images of 'regular' people out walking with their friends may be more likely to resonate with the majority of seniors and consequently be more effective than images of elite athletes competing in sport (Horton et al. 2013).

In addition to a tendency to subscribe to a biomedical model of successful aging that focuses on health and physical functioning, Masters athletes will often moralize their involvement in sport (Dionigi 2010b; Gard et al. 2017). By taking responsibility for their health and maintaining their vitality through actively embracing a Sport for Life approach to aging, these athletes feel that they are fulfilling their moral obligation to remain healthy, and thereby minimizing the burden on both their families and the State in terms of health-care expenditures (Dionigi et al. 2014; Gard et al. 2017). Indeed, research has supported the notion that increasing physical activity in older adults will substantially reduce age-related health-care costs (Andreyeva and Sturm 2006; Carlson et al. 2015; Katzmarzyk et al. 2000). This philosophical approach can be empowering, yet at the same time it can perpetuate the cultural fear of the health risks associated with aging. Taking responsibility for one's health has been an important public health message in recent years as governments have battled various health risks associated with smoking, heart disease, and obesity (see Gard and Dionigi 2016). This directly reflects Rowe and Kahn's (1997) view that older adults can be held accountable for maintaining health and achieving success throughout later life. However, policy statements that place sole responsibility on the individual for maintaining physical activity participation and health during older adulthood are problematic (Phoenix and Grant 2009). The inherent danger is that this can become a manner by which governments unburden themselves of the responsibility of providing adequate health-care and social programs for those who are less fortunate (Biggs 2014; Dillaway and Byrnes 2009; Gard and Dionigi 2016; Gard et al. 2017). Moreover, while taking control of one's health through exercise and diet can be a liberating experience, it has the potential to position older people who cannot, or do not, keep active as 'lazy', 'immoral' or 'a burden on society' (Dionigi and Horton 2012; Gard et al. 2017). Thus, while Sport for All is

inextricably linked to taking responsibility for one's own health and well-being, it ultimately underestimates the multitude of social and economic factors that influence an individual's health and ability to participate with increasing age.

Barriers to Sport for All in Older Adulthood

Policy statements such as Sport for All have likely contributed to the majority of older adults recognizing the importance of incorporating exercise into personal lifestyle habits, yet policy has had little tangible impact on physical activity levels (Horton et al. 2008; Ory et al. 2003). In an attempt to change this lifestyle pattern and improve health outcomes in later adulthood, a substantial amount of research has focused on identifying barriers and motivators to exercise within this demographic (Schutzer and Graves 2004). While considerations such as health concerns and time constraints have been acknowledged across studies (Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2003; Mathews et al. 2010), differences exist in terms of which variables are perceived as barriers or motivators to exercise across different racial and ethnic groups (Mathews et al. 2010). Additionally, 'health' may be perceived as a barrier if exercise is limited due to disease or disability, whereas 'health' may be perceived as a motivator if exercise is used as a tool to improve or maintain health status (Cohen-Mansfield et al. 2003; Mathews et al. 2010). This difficulty in distinguishing between barriers and motivators to exercise among older adults undoubtedly adds to the complexity of unraveling the relationship between physical activity participation and older adulthood.

In an effort to understand physical activity participation in older adulthood, Smith et al. (2012) examined the relationship between barriers and nonparticipation in physical activity within a representative sample of community-dwelling men and women across Canada, age 60 years and older, who did not identify health as a barrier. Regardless of physical activity level, 89% of this sample did not identify a single barrier to participation. Of the individuals who identified one or more barriers to physical activity (e.g., cost, lack of transportation, fear of injury, lack of time), response rates to each barrier were similar, irrespective of whether

they were a participant or nonparticipant. Contrary to previous research, these so-called ‘barriers’ do not appear to be responsible for the lack of physical activity participation by Canadian seniors (Smith et al. 2012). However, despite these individuals not identifying ‘health’ as a barrier to physical activity participation, self-reported chronic conditions functioned as significant predictors of nonparticipation in this sample. This outcome may suggest that there is a potential divide between an older adult’s self-perception of health and their underlying health status. It is conceivable that these older adults have learned to adapt to their chronic health conditions and as such do not identify them as a barrier to participation (Smith et al. 2012). Similarly, work conducted by Horton et al. (2008) indicated that even in the presence of adverse health issues, ‘health’ is rarely cited as a barrier to physical activity. Instead, participants attributed a lack of physical activity participation primarily to psychological factors, such as minimal motivation or laziness, although their relative youth (age 62–74 years), educational level (minimum of high school) and cultural values of self-responsibility for health may have influenced their self-assessment.

These findings suggest that a change in focus is needed from describing barriers and motivators to physical activity, to designing sustainable, individualized programs that will target the needs of older adults who may have underlying health conditions, among other constraints (Smith et al. 2012). This shift will inevitably require knowledgeable staff who provide social support and can deliver meaningful programs to a diverse population (Grant and Kluge 2012), along with the required funding that accompanies physical activity interventions (Sallis et al. 1998). A wide range of abilities, motivations, and barriers exist, and it should therefore not be assumed that one programming option, or Sport for All approach, is suitable for all older adults (O’Brien Cousins 2000; Phoenix and Grant 2009). Additionally, perceptions of physical activity involvement held by older adults are complex as they are embedded in socially constructed norms, which are often impacted by contradictory messages regarding exercise, such as Sport for Life slogans versus warnings to seek a physician’s approval prior to initiating an exercise program (Grant 2004; O’Brien Cousins 2000). Thus, it is important to remain cognizant of such perceptions and messages, as they undoubtedly affect the older

adult's decision to participate in regular exercise (Grant 2004). Furthermore, caution should be taken when advocating for participation on the basis of delaying the aging process as these messages have the potential to reinforce negative aging stereotypes (Dionigi and O'Flynn 2007) and may regulate the actions of older adults in an unhealthy manner. However, a systematic review by Gayman et al. (2017) and research by Young and Callary note that further work is needed in this area (see Young and Callary's chapter in this collection).

While older adults understand the benefits of exercise and physical activity (Ory et al. 2003) and identify minimal barriers to participation (Smith et al. 2012), it is plausible that the decision to participate in physical activity and exercise in older adulthood remains suboptimal due to low internal desire (Grant 2001, 2004). The challenge is to empower older adults to seek personal motives to be physically active, and provide avenues to aid older adults to find meaning in movement and overcome barriers that are presented at an individual level. This may be accomplished by encouraging global consciousness to the fact that aging is a highly dynamic and complex process that is full of both consistencies and inconsistencies, and thus cannot be exclusively managed or manipulated by policies and programming (Grant 2004).

Broadening the Approach to Aging Successfully

Due to the dynamic nature of the aging process, it is important to adopt a broad approach to successful aging that is both suitable and appealing to older adults with a spectrum of abilities and preferences. Among research focused on participation in physical activities, fitness, and sport, diverse benefits impacting one's ability to age successfully have been noted (e.g., Everard et al. 2000; Geard et al. 2017; Mendes et al. 2003; Meisner et al. 2010). Everard et al. (2000) reported that involvement in high-demand leisure activities (e.g., swimming) resulted in the maintenance of physical function, as well as the preservation of cognitive functioning. Geard et al. (2017) present evidence to suggest that Masters

athletes could be considered exemplars of successful aging according to their proposed multidimensional successful aging definition. Furthermore, Mendes de Leon et al. (2003) and Meisner et al. (2010) concluded that participation in physical activity enhances one's level of social engagement. However, given the low participation rates in physical activity among older adults, perhaps any activity that fosters some type of engagement should be encouraged. This approach aligns with the intentions of the active aging political framework proposed by the WHO, which aims to enhance the quality of life of older adults through continued participation in a range of activities including social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and civic affairs (WHO 2002b). It is clear that the intentions of this international movement, focused solely on the older adult population, contrasts Sport for Life and Sport for All approaches, as it moves beyond participation in physical activity and sport (WHO 2002b).

While the concept of active aging currently dominates local, national, and international policy agendas and research initiatives (Pike 2011), WHO's inclusive and equitable intentions regarding engagement during the aging process is often overshadowed by a focus on 'socially useful' activities (Mendes 2013; Pike 2011). This limits the scope of active aging and prioritizes engagement in physical activity and employment, as society values these activities as a means for older adults to take responsibility for their personal aging process (Foster and Walker 2015; Mendes 2013; Pike 2011). Unfortunately, by subscribing to this limited view of active aging, environmental and political constraints, as well as unequal power relations (including those associated with gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality) are reproduced, as these types of engagement opportunities may be more available and accessible to privileged groups (Dillaway and Byrnes 2009; Katz and Calasanti 2015). Consequently, important differences among older adults' abilities, resources, or desires for participation are overlooked, resulting in diminished applicability of this (well-intentioned) active aging movement to the general senior population (Mendes 2013). This reveals a divergence between WHO's intentions of the active aging framework, and how this active aging concept has been exploited in policy, research, and media (see Gard and Dionigi, this volume).

The broad scope of activity participation intended of WHO's active aging framework parallels the recent expansion of the concept of 'engagement' within the research literature. Since the proposal of Rowe and Kahn's (1997) model of successful aging in which 'engagement' included the maintenance of interpersonal relationships and participation in productive activities, this concept has been expanded to include a breadth of engagement activities (Mendes de Leon 2005). For example, Maier and Klumb (2005) differentiate between regenerative (required for physical survival, e.g., eating) and discretionary activities (completed based on abilities and preferences), with discretionary activities being further divided into productive (completed for their outcomes, and do not lose benefit if delegated to a third party, e.g., cutting the lawn) and consumptive (completed for their own sake and lose benefit if delegated to a third party, e.g., reading a novel) activities. Similarly, various forms of social engagement have been identified, including social networks, social support, and social participation (Bennett 2002). With this expansion to the concept of engagement in older adulthood, there has been a lack of consistent terminology and categorization of activities. Activities such as housework or shopping have been interchangeably labeled as 'productive' or 'instrumental' (Everard et al. 2000), while activities such as volunteering have been labeled both as leisure (Everard et al. 2000) and productive pursuits (Rowe and Kahn 1997). Much like the research surrounding successful aging more generally, little consensus exists as to the terminology, conceptualization, and measurement specific to engagement in older adulthood (Bath and Deeg 2005; Geard et al. 2017; Mendes de Leon 2005).

However, regardless of the breadth of activities recognized as forms of engagement (i.e., productive, leisure, or social activities), or who defines the boundaries of engagement (i.e., researcher or older adult), maintaining an active engagement in life has been consistently related to a number of benefits in older adulthood. Engagement in productive (e.g., Hinterlong et al. 2007; Menec 2003; Warburton and Peel 2008), social (e.g., Andrew 2005; Maier and Klumb 2005; Mendes de Leon et al. 2003), leisure (Menec and Chipperfield 1997), and solitary activities (Lennartsson and Silverstein 2001) has been associated with a reduced risk of mortality, decreased functional impairment, and improvements in

self-reported health. Furthermore, a variety of forms of engagement have been associated with a decreased number of medical appointments and prescriptions, a reduced likelihood of receiving in-home support (Bath and Gardiner 2005), and increased maintenance of high cognitive functioning (Everard et al. 2000; Hultsch et al. 1999; Schooler and Mulatu 2001; Wang et al. 2002). Beyond the positive impact on physical and cognitive health, a number of psychological benefits can also be elicited by continued engagement into older adulthood including increased feelings of belonging (Murray and Crummett 2010), happiness (Menec 2003; Thoits and Hewitt 2001), and well-being (Herzog et al. 1998; Thoits and Hewitt 2001), as well as decreases in depressive symptoms (Glass et al. 2006; Thoits and Hewitt 2001; Yum and Lightfoot 2005). In addition, the opportunity to attain benefits through less traditional activities has been exemplified by Clarke and Warren (2007) who identified planning for one's death as an activity that afforded older adults feelings of control over their life through engagement in this decision-making activity. Taken together, these findings suggest that it is the act of engagement, rather than the specific activity in which an older adult participates, that is important to aging successfully. The intentions of the active aging framework (WHO 2002b) are therefore supported, as participation in a variety of activities can provide older adults with an array of benefits throughout the aging process. This observation suggests that diverse and personalized engagement profiles can support the ability to age successfully in an individualized, self-defined manner that can be applicable to a wide range of older adults. The broad definitions and holistic view older adults ascribe to successful aging are substantiated by these findings, as the identification of a variety of avenues to achieve success in later life complements the presumption that successful aging is multidimensional and person-specific.

While individualized engagement profiles are appropriate for the complex nature of the aging process, Carr (2014) identified common patterns of engagement among community dwelling older adults (mean age = 79.2 years; age range = 65 to 97 years; 21 males, 33 females; predominantly identified as Caucasian; annual household income of 65% of sample = less than \$60,000). Engagement patterns were based on four activity types (productive, social, active, and passive activities), which

were created by the participants categorizing specific engagement activities (e.g., reading, paid employment, visiting friends, using the computer) as productive, social, active, or passive. Primarily, older adults tend to participate most frequently in passive leisure activities (e.g., watching television, reading), and least frequently in productive activities (e.g., paid employment, housework; Carr 2014). Social activities (e.g., visiting with friends) tend to be more frequent than active leisure activities (e.g., light sports or recreational activities), however they do not exceed the frequency of participation in passive pursuits (Carr 2014). This overall engagement profile tends to remain stable throughout all decades of older adulthood (Carr 2014), although the actual frequency of participation in activity types often changes (Crombie et al. 2004; Oman et al. 1999; Wahrendorf et al. 2006). Specifically, increasing age is commonly accompanied by a decrease in productive participation (Oman et al. 1999; Wahrendorf et al. 2006), as well as a decrease in active leisure participation (Crombie et al. 2004), while the frequency of participation in social and passive leisure activities are often maintained throughout the decades of later life (Carr 2014).

Five potential reasons for such changes in engagement patterns during older adulthood have been derived through qualitative inquiry: (1) health and physical limitations, (2) death, (3) freedom, (4) desire, and (5) influential external factors, such as one's family role, personal finances, and the availability of direct support (Carr 2014). Regardless of the decade of life, health and physical limitations are readily expressed as inhibiting engagement in later life, which is often due to an overall 'slowing down' of physical abilities, reduction in physical senses, or decreases to energy levels (Carr 2014; Crombie et al. 2004; Fisk et al. 1998). However, among men and women 65 to 74 years of age (predominately identified as Caucasian; annual household income of 75% of sample = less than \$60,000), health and physical limitations have also been recognized as a motivator to increase participation in active leisure pursuits to combat health-related issues (Carr 2014). It is this subset of older adults that are modeling a Sport for Life approach by participating in physical activities and/or sport for the physical health benefits.

A second reason for a change in engagement patterns throughout older adulthood is death, which includes experiencing death within one's

social circle (Andrew 2005; McLaughlin et al. 2010), as well as the death of one's spouse. Though this theme is more pronounced with increasing age, it is identified within all decades of older adulthood. One distinct difference should be noted; experiencing the death of a social contact is often related to a decrease in participation specific to social activities, while experiencing the death of a spouse is often related to a reduction in overall activity (Carr 2014; Strain et al. 2002). However, experiencing the death of a spouse, family member, or friend can generate participation in certain activities. Specifically, it may prompt individuals to consider their own death, resulting in an increased sense of autonomy through the writing of a will and the planning of one's own funeral (Clarke and Warren 2007).

Engagement patterns during older adulthood may also be altered by a feeling of 'freedom' that is associated with later life, which allows older adults to reallocate time to different activities (i.e., paid employment replaced by a hobby of choice). This freedom not only relates to time-use and activity choices, but also a freedom from past priorities (Carr 2014). In addition, previous research suggests that participation in any type of leisure activity (whether it is watching television, exercising, or shopping) can provide an individual with freedom from stressors associated with negative life events. This freedom can be a result of such engagement creating a distraction, providing neutral or positive feelings, or allowing a space for personal change and adaptation (Kleiber et al. 2002). As one would expect, such freedom results in an individualized change in engagement patterns to allow for participation in preferred activities and greater enjoyment during one's later years. It is plausible that this reason for changing engagement patterns may relate to the ineffectiveness of approaches such as Sport for All, since regardless of the benefits highlighted via these sport-specific promotional messages, older adults are unlikely to participate if enjoyment and positive affect are not obtained from the activity (Chilvers et al. 2010; Fricke and Unsworth 2001; Menec and Chipperfield 1997). Promotional messages that encourage meaningful engagement, regardless of the activity, may be more applicable and have greater implications for the senior population.

An additional reason for a change in engagement patterns throughout later life is a reduction in older adults' overall desire to participate

in activity (Carr 2014). This supports previous literature, which indicates that engagement patterns in older adulthood are often altered as a result of a reduced interest (Agahi et al. 2006; Crombie et al. 2004). Of note, however, is that this reduction in desire does not apply to passive activities, as older adults frequently express increased contentment partaking in home-based passive leisure activities, such as reading and watching television, with increasing age (Carr 2014; Gauthier and Smeeding 2003).

Finally, engagement patterns may also be affected by external factors including one's family role, personal finances, and the availability of direct support (Carr 2014). Family role is often specific to the responsibilities associated with caring for grandchildren, as engagement patterns are commonly shifted to incorporate this familial obligation. Inevitably, time spent caring for others directly affects an individual's time spent participating in other activities (Fisk et al. 1998). Additionally, engagement patterns may also be altered based on discretionary income, with activity being restricted if an individual cannot afford the monetary cost of participation (Bassuk et al. 1999; Fisk et al. 1998). These findings identify the implications of social class on engagement, which has been supported by work that identified that older women's disposition toward physical activities is dependent on their social and material living conditions at the time or stage of life (Dumas and Laberge 2005). Lastly, the availability of direct support is specifically associated with patterns of participation in productive activities (e.g., cutting the lawn, grocery shopping, vacuuming), as such participation is likely to decrease if the older adult has support from a third party to complete these tasks (Maier and Klumb 2005). For instance, if an older adult has a neighbor to cut his/her lawn, the older adult no longer needs to complete this task and therefore time spent in productive pursuits is decreased.

These explanations for changing engagement patterns span the years of older adulthood, with some explanations yielding similar patterns of activities, and others resulting in individualized activity change. This research offers additional evidence to the complexity of the aging process by providing a snapshot of the current state of engagement profiles of older adults. Campaigns encouraging participation in physical activity and/or sport during older adulthood need to consider factors such as

physical functioning and health, personal desires and interests toward participation, social and material living conditions, and the availability of financial and interpersonal resources, and adapt these well-intentioned movements to align with the realities of the aging process and people's everyday lives. It is undoubtedly true that concepts such as Sport for Life and Sport for All would elicit benefits in the case that older adults subscribe to such approaches; however, it remains difficult to make a global impact if older adults do not endorse such campaigns on an individual level. As such, the collective objective should be to identify and encourage a lifestyle that is appealing and perceived as attainable to the older adult population, yet will still promote (self-defined) 'success' during older age. Blanket statements such as Sport of Life and Sport for All suggest that older adults are a homogeneous group, and thus struggle with applicability to the ever-evolving and individualized engagement patterns of older adulthood. As a result, perhaps an emphasis on an active aging framework (WHO 2002b), which allows the older individual to define 'meaningful activity' and that accounts for the heterogeneity of older age is of value. Such an approach provides multiple avenues in which to find success, and reflects the changing state of engagement profiles associated with older age, as well as the broad criteria older adults associate with a successful aging process.

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Index¹

NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS

2014 Pan Pacific Masters Games Handbook, 294

A

Aboriginal youth, 16, 162

Accessibility, 6, 9, 13, 14, 37, 79, 116, 180, 250, 253–255, 264, 268, 277, 307, 331

ACOG, *see* American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Active Ageing policies, 5

Active aging, 297, 318, 331–333, 337

Active/Healthy Lifestyles, 287

Active People Survey (APS), 201

Adolescents, sport participation findings, 29–31

sport policy, 30–31

Adulthood, 198, 325

older (*see* Older adulthood)

Adventure and Recreation in Society (ARISc), 307

Affluence, 293

Ageing

active, 297

authentic, 302

deficit model of, 301, 302, 308

everyday (*see* Everyday ageing)

everyday experience of, 303

heroic model of, 303

positive, 303

Agelessness, 307

Age-related diseases, 72, 78, 81

Age resistance, 297

Age-specific determinants, 37

Age-specific participation rates, 27

¹Note: Page numbers followed by “n” refers to notes

- Aging
 active, 318, 331–333
 successful, 322, 324, 337
- AIDS, *see* HIV/AIDS
- Allen, K., 163
- American Academy of Pediatrics
 (APP), 94, 97, 103, 112
- American College of Obstetricians
 and Gynecologists (ACOG),
 217
- AMG, *see* Australian Masters Games
- Amniocentesis, 218
- Amsterdam Games, 249
- Andragogy, 274–276
- Anglo-Saxon cluster, 55, 57
- Antenatal care, 215
- Anti-ageing agenda, 5
- Anti-ageing, 5, 267, 268, 297, 302
- APP, *see* American Academy of
 Pediatrics
- Apparel, 283, 292, 296
- ARISc, *see* Adventure and Recreation
 in Society
- ASC, *see* Australian Sports
 Commission
- Assigning responsibility for one's
 personal health, 322
- Athlete's birthplace, 122
- At-risk youth programmes
 neoliberal governance, 157–159
 risky edge, 163–166
 to success, 159–162
- Australian Masters Games (AMG),
 286, 289–292, 294
- Australian policy, sport, 74–81
- Australian Sports Commission
 (ASC), 5, 24, 28, 30, 31, 33,
 34, 36, 72–74, 80, 273, 285
- Australian Veteran's Hockey
 Association, 285
- Authentic ageing, 302
- Autonomy, 227, 228, 230, 240, 276,
 335
- Azzarito, L., 135, 149, 150
- B**
- Baby boom generation, 311, 325
- Babysitting, 140, 149
- Back identities, 166
- Baker, B.L., 235
- Baker, J., 30, 123, 124
- Bamblett, L., 162, 164
- Barton, L., 176, 187
- Beamish, R., 125
- Behaviour change, 16, 272
- Belonging, 200, 247, 251, 333
- Bennett, A., 265, 268
- Big fish little pond effect, 123, 124
- Biological ageing process, 78
- Biopower, 212
- Birch, J.S., 124
- Birchwood, D., 203
- Birth and death rates, 212
- Birth defects, 218
- Birthplace, athlete, 122–124
- Blind football, 186
- Blue ellipses, 25
- Boccia, 186
- Body piercing, 142, 143
- Boomeritis, 311
- Bordo, S., 148
- Bourdieu, P., 302, 304, 309, 313n1
- Boxing/kick-boxing, 161
- Brodie, D., 201
- Brown, M., 246, 257

- C
- Calisthenic and muscle toning
exercises, 216
- Callary, B., 13, 14, 330
- Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L)
movement, 5, 322, 323
- Capital
cultural, 313n1
economic, 304, 313n1
social, 305, 313n1
symbolic, 313n1
- Career break, 306, 313n2
- Catering, for participant spending,
289–291
- Celebrity behaviour, 164
- Celetoids, celebrity reality TV, 163
- Chatelaine*, 215
- Chelsea, L., 293
- Chen, E., 129n2
- Childbirth, 214, 230
- Childcare centers, 98
- Childhood, 195
obesity, 73
and youth significance, 200–203
- Children, sport participation
findings, 27
sport policy, 28–29
sports program for, 77
- Chronic stress, 221
- Church model of sport, 48
- Clarke, A., 333
- Climbing, 101, 294, 305, 309, 311
- Club sport participation, 11, 57, 75
- Coaches, 5, 74, 104, 105, 110, 111,
121, 126, 128, 182–185, 187,
232, 273–278
- Coalter, F., 59, 160, 197, 199
- Cognitive accessibility, 264
- Commercialisation, 6, 72, 78, 250,
255, 284, 287, 296, 298
- Commercial providers, 48
- Commodification of Masters sport,
284, 288–297
catering for participant spending
and partying, 289–291
fit, targeting, 291–295
performing, 295
touring body, 295
- Community, 8, 28, 35, 38, 70, 72,
80, 93, 94, 139, 141, 146,
147, 149, 151, 155, 156, 158,
165, 167, 181, 182, 184, 187,
189, 190, 206, 217, 233, 238,
239, 247–250, 253, 257n1,
286, 294, 322, 333
- Community sport, 80, 182, 184,
187, 190, 206
commercialisation of, 72
on TV, 186
- Community youth sport
programmes, 155
- Competition, 2–5, 25, 28, 29, 47,
70, 94, 96, 124, 127, 129,
145, 164, 183, 203, 204, 246,
247, 254, 269, 285, 286, 289,
291, 292, 294, 305, 324
- Compulsory schooling, 198
- Confederation of Australian Sport
(CAS), 75, 76
- Consumers, 75, 76, 136, 216, 284,
285, 287, 297
- Convenience sampling, 271
- Côté, J., 122
- Council of Europe, 4, 175, 176
- Craig, L., 231
- Creative Class, 79–80

Criminal activities, 158, 160, 169n7
 CrossFit enthusiast, 219
 Cult of athleticism, 70
 Cultural barriers, 245
 Cultural capital, 309, 312, 313n1
 Curriculum, 14, 71, 264, 273, 274,
 277, 278
 Curry, D., 142
 Curtis, J.E., 123–124
 Cybathletes, 190

D

Data collection, 50, 113, 158, 271
 Davidson, J., 249, 252, 255, 257
 DCMS, *see* Department of Culture,
 Media and Sport
 Deficit model of ageing, 301, 302,
 308
 Democratisation, 71
 material and rhetorical, 71
 Demographic information, 212
 Denton, A., 307
 Department of Culture, Media and
 Sport (DCMS), 200, 203
 DePauw, K. P., 176, 179, 180,
 185–188
 Developmental model of sport
 participation (DMSP), 96–98
 Developmental Origins of Health
 and Disease (DOHaD), 219,
 220
 Dickhead Award, 291
 Dionigi, R. A., 31, 33, 268
 Disability and sport for all, 176–179
 Disability rights, 177
 Disability sports, 175, 177–180,
 182, 185, 186, 189, 190

Disabled activists, 177
 Disabled people, 176–178
 in sport, 179–180
 Discretionary activities, 332
 Discrimination-free participation,
 245
 Display of character, everyday ageing
 and, 308–312
 Disposable income, 204, 257, 285,
 293
 Diversity, 2, 11, 16, 45–61, 75,
 78, 96, 98, 103, 109, 180,
 246, 248, 249, 257, 268,
 269
 DMSP, *see* Developmental model of
 sport participation
 DOHaD, *see* Developmental Origins
 of Health and Disease
 Dominant model, 181
 Doubleday, R., 312
 Draper, H., 303
 Drop out, 35, 53, 201, 204
 from sport, 198
 Drug-use, 160

E

Early childhood, 1, 11, 77, 108, 123,
 227
 Early talent identification, 11, 118,
 121
 Economic capital, 304, 313n1
 Education and sport participation,
 199–200
 Eichberg, H., 47
 Elite athlete, 11, 122, 232–234, 247,
 327
 development, 11, 117

- Elite sport, 7, 29, 32, 47, 49, 58,
122, 240
model, 4
mothers, 231–234, 239
- Empowerment, 256, 324
personal, 251–252
- Engagement, 263, 332–337
market, 293
opportunities, 331
in outdoor adventurous activities,
302, 304–306, 308, 310, 312,
313
patterns of, 333–337
social, 332
- Enjoyment, 3, 12, 30, 94, 97, 102,
106, 107, 109, 117, 123, 126,
202, 235, 265, 268–270, 335
- Entertainment, 214, 286, 290, 294,
296
- Equality, 58, 247, 251, 254
- Ericsson, K.A., 109
- ESports, 6–7
athletes, 7
- EU28, sport for all, 49–51
- Eurobarometer, 50, 51, 54, 56, 57,
59, 61n6
- European countries, 36, 47, 48,
51–53, 55–59
sport participation in, 197
- European Member States, 50, 199
- European sport model, 46–49, 61n2,
199
- European sport systems, 46
- European Union, 4, 46, 50, 51, 53,
55, 59, 61n5, 61n6, 196
- European Union Member States,
196
- Evans, B., 150
- Evans, J., 136
- Everard, K.M., 330
- Everyday ageing
contemporary trends in, 308
and display of character, 308–312
- Everyday experience of ageing,
301–303
- Exclusion, 12, 97, 149, 151, 166,
177, 185, 186, 213, 245,
254–256, 267, 271, 272, 304
- Export income, 74
- F**
- Facebook, 219
- Familial unity, 230
- Family activity programming,
237–239
- Family leisure, 230
- Family, 1, 13, 28, 30, 37, 98, 127,
139–141, 143, 148, 149, 151,
158, 183–185, 187, 200, 202,
203, 227, 230–234, 236, 250,
290, 292, 306, 334–336
role in engagement patterns, 336
- Farrell, L., 199
- FCG, *see* Federation of Gay Games
- Federation of Gay Games (FGG),
246, 254–256, 258n3
Scholarship Program, 255
- Females, sport participation
findings, 33
sport policy, 34
- Femininity, 229
- Fenton, S.J., 303
- Fetal imaging and assessment, 218
- Fetal monitoring, 218
- Fetal programming, 219, 222n3

- Fit for Delivery, 220
 Flexible discursive resource, 74
 Football-based social inclusion projects, 160
 Football, notion of, 162
 Football (soccer), 160
 Football World Cup, 71
 Foreign investment, 74–81
 Formal teacher-centred/led lessons, 159
 Foster, C., 162
 Foucault, M., 156, 157, 212, 213
 Freeman, P.A., 235
 Fun 4 Sports, 77
 Functional sport commitment, 268
 Fundamental motor skills, 28, 38
- G**
- Games, 3, 4, 69, 94, 120, 162, 183, 216, 273, 285, 324
 Gap year, 306, 307, 313n2
 Gard, M., 31, 33, 79, 80
 Gauthier, M., 217
 Gay, 13, 72, 76, 77, 248
 Gay Games, 79, 247–258, 271
 culture of exclusion, 254–256
 homophobia and, 250
 new social connections, forming, 252–254
 participants, experiences of, 250–251
 personal empowerment, 251–252
 Gayman, A., 330
 Geard, D., 330
 Gender, 1, 5, 9, 13, 20, 25, 37, 55, 89, 98, 146, 149, 158, 163, 165, 198, 199, 207n1, 213, 229, 234, 240, 246–250, 252, 257, 286, 323, 331
 Generalizability, 123, 271, 272
 Gestational diabetes mellitus, 220
 GfK Blue Moon, 74, 285
 Gillen, L.L., 322
 Girls' disengagement, in sports and physical activity, 136
 Girls presentation of self
 body appearance, 142
 cast in, 139–141
 community, 146–147
 in home, 147–149
 identifying school, 144–146
 methodology, 138–139
 in physical culture, 137–138
 settings, 141
 Globalisation, 287
 Global mortality, 196
 Goalball, 186
 Goffman, E., 137, 142, 149, 150, 302, 308, 309
 Golf, 24, 113n2, 215, 284, 292, 293, 295
 Governmentality, 155–157, 167, 213
 Green, M., 73
 Guilty, 7, 229
- H**
- Hargreaves, J., 253
 Hartmann-Tews, I., 55
 Hastings, D.W., 288
 Health, 269
 barrier to physical activity participation, 328, 329
 exemplars, 324

implications, 16
 and physical education, in
 pedagogical activity, 135
 Health and physical education
 (HPE), 2, 89, 135
 Health promotion, 268, 288, 291,
 319
 campaigns, 9
 Healthy Lifestyles, 284, 287
 manifestations of promoting,
 through marketing, 296–297
 Healthy nation state
 prenatal care, 213–215
 Heinilä, K., 47
 Heroic model of ageing, 302–303
 Hickey-Moody, A., 158
 High performance sport
 participation biases in, 117
 High-level competitive sport, 49
 HIV/AIDS, 249, 257
 Hockey, 5, 13, 24, 98, 113n2, 120,
 122–124, 216, 245, 250, 252,
 253, 258n4, 290, 291, 295
 Hodler, M.R., 233
 Holloway, S.L., 151
 Homophobia
 and Gay Games, 246–250
 Horton, S., 329
 Hutchesson, R., 156, 158, 161–163,
 165, 167
 I
 Ideal adulthood, 155, 160
 Identity, 137
 IMGGA, *see* International Masters
 Games Association
 Impression management, 137, 310

Improving Maternal & Progeny
 Obesity Via Exercise
 (IMPROVE), 220
 Income
 disposable, 293
 and engagement pattern,
 333–337
 Indigenous young men, 162
 Individual discipline, 212
 Individual participants, 48
 Inequalities
 in gender and social class, 198
 with income, 206
 negative impact, 205
 poor work and housing
 conditions, 206
 in sports participation, 188
 unemployment, 206
 Infancy, 4, 95, 96, 227, 229, 322
 Infant rates, 214
 Informational accessibility, 264
 Institutional organisations, 47, 58
 Instrumental activities, 332
 Integration of disability sport, 175
 International Gay Games, 246
 International Masters Games
 Association (IMGGA), 5, 286
 International Olympic Committee
 (IOC), 4, 71, 176, 323
 International study comparisons, 36
 Invisibility of disability, in sport,
 179, 186
 Involvement opportunities (IOs),
 271, 277
 in adult sport, promoting, 265
 attracting new participants,
 266–268
 Irish post-primary school, 138

J

Jane Fonda's Pregnancy, Birth, and Recovery Program, 216

Jarvie, G., 7

Jewellery

in girls identities, 142

Johnston, R. J., 146

Joy, 45, 81, 236, 324

Judicial system, 158

K

Kahn, R.L., 318–320, 327, 332

Kayaking, 305, 310

Kev's Sports Tours, 295

Kirk, D., 71, 136

Klumb, P.L., 332

Knowledge transmission, 159

Knowles, M.S., 275

L

Labelling, 246

Later life, 317, 319, 320, 324–327, 333–335

Laurendeau, J., 165

LaVoi, N.M., 234

LCSE, *see* Life Cycle Skill Formation

Leberman, S.I., 232

Leisure

feminists, 249

mothers, examination of, 231

normative discourse of, 229

Leisure literature and mothers'

experiences of sport,

connections between, 234–237

Leisure-time physical activity, 25, 32,

35, 37, 196

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and

transgendered (LGBT)

community, 246–249, 255,

256, 257n1

Life cycle skill formation (LCSF), 118–222

complementarity, 119

multiplier effects, 119

self-productivity, 119

sensitive periods, 119

Life expectancy, 205, 212, 305, 311

Lifespan, determinants, 25

Lifestyle, 2, 9, 14, 16, 37, 72, 73, 75,

77, 78, 82, 83, 195, 200, 204,

214, 218, 233, 235, 237, 248,

277, 284, 286, 288, 289, 295,

297, 298, 302, 303, 305, 307,

311, 313, 319, 322, 323, 328,

337

Lifestyle activities, 198

Life transitions, 8, 158

and sport participation, 195–207

Light sport communities, 48

Lithopoulos, A., 266, 267

Long-term athlete development

model, 95, 96, 98

LSCF, 129

LTAD, 94–96, 98, 99, 103, 105, 110

Lucas-Carr, C., 233

Lunn, P., 199

Lyng, S., 156, 165, 167

M

MacDonald, D.J., 123

Maier, H., 332

Mainstream sport, 175, 177–179,

181, 182, 185, 186

- Makaton symbols, 180
- Male behaviour/aggression, 160
- Male gaze, 146, 147
- Males, sport participation
findings, 33
sport policy, 34
- Maori boys, 156, 162
- Marginalisation, from sporting
activities, 304
- Market Segmentation Study, 285
- Marketing, 248
Healthy Lifestyles and Sports for
All, manifestations of
promoting, 297
mid-life, 283–298
- Marketisation, 78, 80, 284, 296,
297
- Marsh, H.W., 123
- Martin, D.J., 322
- Martinez, J. T., 237, 238
- Masculinity, 229
- Mass media, 248
- Mass sport participation, 3, 6, 11,
76, 196–198
and sport policy, 196
- Masters athletes, 13, 78, 80, 265,
268, 273, 274, 277, 284, 288,
291, 294, 318, 324–327, 330,
331
- Masters movement, 14, 79, 287,
288, 293, 298
- Masters sport, 266
absence of sociological critique,
284–287
commodification of, 297
- Masters sport movement, 14, 78,
284, 285
- Masters swim coaches, 276
- Masters swimmers, 268,
273–276
- Maternal mortality, 214, 215
- Maternal obesity, 219
- Matthews, R., 165
- MCHC, *see* Melbourne Central
Hockey Club
- McTeer, W., 126, 127
- Medicalization, 214
of pregnancy, 212
- Medicine for everyone, 73
- Meisner, B., 331
- Melbourne Central Hockey Club
(MCHC), 250, 258n4
- Melbourne Storm, 164, 253
- Mendes de Leon, C.F., 331
- Mendick, H., 163
- Merchandise, 141, 283, 289, 295,
296
- Messages, 14, 15, 75, 77, 112, 255,
265–268, 277, 285, 294–296,
307, 311, 312, 327, 329, 330,
335
- Metropolitan areas, sport
participation
findings, 34
sport policy, 35
- Metz, J.L., 234
- Middle-class, 9, 13, 38, 77, 163,
254, 256, 257, 284, 288, 297,
303, 304
- Mid-life market, 287
- Miller, P., 213
- Moore, J., 234
- Moral imperative, 297
- Morris, L., 160
- Motherhood
normative discourse of, 229

Mothers, 8, 13, 100, 103, 139, 141, 215, 218, 220–222, 227–240
 elite sport, 234
 experiences of sport and leisure
 literature, connections
 between, 237
 sport and leisure, examination of,
 229–231

Motivational profiles, 268, 270

Motives, 16, 106, 268–270, 278, 330

Motor skill development, 110

Motor skills, 28, 38, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 109

Ms., feminist magazine, 211, 216

Mullan, K., 231

N

National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework, 3

National sport policy, 30, 35

NCDs, *see* Noncommunicable diseases

NCHC, *see* Northern Central Hockey Club

Negative self-concept, 274

Neoliberalism, 72, 74–76, 79, 81, 82, 89, 213

Netball activity, 183

New social connections, forming, 251–254

New Zealand, 232, 283

Nichols, G., 160

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), 196

Non-disabled people, 177–179, 186, 188–190, 197

Normative discourse

of leisure, 229

of motherhood, 229

of sport, 229

Northern Central Hockey Club (NCHC), 250

Notion of transition, 158

NSW, *see* New South Wales

O

Obesity epidemic, 212, 219–221

Obstetrics and Gynecology, 216

O'Flynn, G., 268, 330

Older adulthood, 317

Sport for All in, barriers to, 330

Older adults, sport participation findings, 32

sport policy, 32, 33

Olympic Charter, 4, 5, 286

Olympic Games, 71, 97, 123, 216

Orange ellipses, 25

Organised sport, 3, 4, 6, 30, 34, 70, 79, 81

Outdoor adventurous sports, 301–313

contemporary trends in, 305–308

traditional, 304–305

Outgames, 257n1

Out-of-school activity, 150

P

Palmer, A.A., 235

Palmer, F.R., 232, 234

Pan Pacific Masters Games (Pan Pacs), 14, 78, 283, 284, 286, 287, 289–296

- Opening Ceremony, 251, 290, 291
- Pan Pacs, *see* Pan Pacific Masters Games
- PAR, *see* Participatory Action Research
- Paralympics, 79, 175
- Participant records, 25
- Participation, 1, 3, 4, 7, 10–14, 16, 17, 23–38, 45–61, 70–82, 93–100, 104, 106, 109, 110, 112, 117–129, 135, 138, 148–150, 160, 175–182, 184, 186, 188–190, 195–207, 218, 227–231, 233, 234, 238–240, 245–252, 254, 256, 257, 263, 265, 267, 274, 284–288, 293, 295, 296, 304, 308, 312, 317, 318, 322–324, 326–337
- Participatory Action Research (PAR), 138
- Partington, E., 287
- Partners and individually-orientated sports, 198
- Partying, 289–291
- Pathologization, of pregnancy, 212
- PCYC, *see* Police and Citizens Youth Club
- Peck, J., 74
- Pedersen, I.K., 232
- Peer group cultures, 144
- Performance-oriented athletes, 14, 288, 297, 298
- Personal empowerment, 251–252
- PE teachers, 183, 185–188
- PHAC, *see* Public Health Agency of Canada
- Phenomenological interviews, 236
- Phoenix, C., 267
- Photovoice, 11, 138, 146, 150
- Physical activity, 3–6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15–17, 25, 28, 32–35, 37, 45, 49–51, 68, 72–74, 76–79, 81–83, 93–103, 109, 112, 135–139, 144, 146–152, 196, 200, 211, 214, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222n2, 222n3, 228, 230, 231, 236–240, 268–270, 277, 286, 298, 305, 317–337
- programming, 237
- Physical education, 2, 3, 12, 60, 136, 138, 144, 145, 149
- teachers, 135
- Physicalities, 135–137, 141, 150
- The Physician and Sportsmedicine*, 217
- Physicians, 212, 215–217, 329
- Physiological ageing process, 79, 81
- Pickett, K., 205
- Pike, E., 309
- Piketty, Thomas, 79
- Playboy bunny merchandise, 141
- Police and Citizens Youth Club (PCYC), 156, 158, 159, 161–165, 168n4, 169n6, 169n7
- Policy agendas, 9, 15, 68, 70, 302, 331
- Policy instrument, sport, 10, 11, 70, 78
- Political rationalities, 213
- Population regulation, 212
- Positive ageing, 303
- Postpartum weight, 220
- Power relations, 213, 331
- Pregnancy science, 211
- Pregnant women, 12, 213–218, 220, 221

- Prenatal care, 213–215, 220, 222
 healthy nation state, 213
- Prenatal exercise, 213
 epigenetic revolution, 219–221
- Preschooler sport participation
 objectives, 95–97
- Preschoolers
 coaching issues, 110–111
 competence and confidence, 105–107
 health benefits of, 99–101
 interpersonal skills, 104, 105
 life skill development, 103
 physical activity, 102, 103
 programming issues, 110
 psychosocial development, 103
 socio-economic constraints on, 98
 sport, guidelines and policies, 111, 112
 sport involvement, 102, 103
 sport, objectives and outcomes, 99
 team player, 107
- The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 137, 309
- Productive activities, 318, 332, 334, 336
- Programming effort, 264
- Promotional effort, 271
- Promotional messages, 14, 266, 327, 335
- Pseudonyms, 99, 138, 258n4, 303
- Psychological coaching, 277
- Psychological health, 321
- Psychosocial coaching, 263–278
- Public health, 6, 20, 69, 76, 81–83, 89, 212, 239, 296, 311, 327
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), 269
- Pyramid metaphor, 47
- R**
- Race suicide, 214
- Reality TV (RTV), 163
- Recreational activities, 334
- Regenerative activities, 332
- Regional areas, sport participation
 findings, 34
 sport policy, 35
- Relative age effect (RAE), 120–123, 128
- Renson, R., 47
- Responsible citizens, 158
- Rich, E., 136
- Risk, 308
- Roberts, K., 201, 204
- Rose, N., 213
- Rowe, J.W., 318–320, 327, 332
- Rowe, N., 206
- RTV. *See* Reality TV (RTV), 163
- Rugby league, 161, 162, 164, 165
- Rural NSW community-based (arts/sports) programmes, 156
- Ryan, C., 288, 289, 296
- S**
- Safe space, 245–58
- Same-sex ballroom dancing, 257
- Sandel, M.J., 80
- Scheerder, J., 48, 51, 52, 54, 55, 196
- School-based sport participants, 31
- School-based sports participation, 25
- Schooling, 3, 80, 158, 162, 166–168, 183, 198
- School-leaving age, 199
- SCM, *see* Sport commitment model
- Second-wave feminism, 211, 212
 exercise science, 215–19
- Secret consumption, 149

- Selection, optimization, and compensation (SOC) model, 322
- Self-awareness, 236
- Self-fulfillment, 236, 275
- Self-identification, 320
- Self-identified barriers, 138
- Self-improvement, 158, 162
- Self-regulation, 158, 159, 230
- Self-salvation project, 158
- Sensitive periods, childhood, 121
- Sensuous organ, 137
- Sexuality, 1, 13, 247, 248, 252, 254, 255, 331
- Sexual orientation, 247, 257, 257n1
- Shared meanings, 247, 251
- Shaw, S.M., 235
- Shielding, physical activity, 149
- Siobhan, 100, 102, 111
- Skyboxification, 80
- Smith, K., 328
- Sobry, C., 46
- Social affiliation, 265, 269, 270
- Social alienation, 5, 82, 155, 166
- Social and mental health benefits, 38
- Social capital, 45, 75, 287, 305, 313n1
- Social geographers, 137
- Social health, 195, 321, 322
- Social inequalities, 129, 197, 198, 200, 233
- Social interaction, 136, 137
- Social marginalisation, 12, 156
- Social networks, 144, 146, 306, 312, 313n1, 332
- Social policy utility, 68
- Social psychological paradigm, 228, 231, 232, 234, 237, 240
- Social sport, 3
- Societal anxiety, 109
- Socio-cultural determinants, 81
- Sociodemographic groups, 203
- Socio-economic barriers, 245
- Socio-economic status (SES), 24, 35, 37, 124–128
- Sociological perspective, of mass adult sporting activities, 284
- Solidarity, 58, 80, 247, 249, 251
- Sparkes, A.C., 267
- Special Eurobarometer, 50, 51, 54
- Sport and Recreation Spatial* programme, 24, 25
- Sportball™, 113n2
- Sportball Kids Sports Programs, 5
- Sport Canada, 94, 269
- Sport commitment model (SCM), 265
- Sport Education and Society*, 136
- Sport England, 196, 197, 200, 201, 203
- Sport England's Active People Survey (APS), 197
- Sport for All ages, 1–17, 83, 129, 284, 287, 317, 322, 324, 325, 327, 331, 335, 337
and disability, 176–179
irony of, 68
leisure and inequality, 203
manifestations of promoting, through marketing, 297
in old adulthood, 323–8
in older adulthood, barriers to, 328–330
scholarship, 227
sport for all policies, 58
universal acid, 68
- Sport for Life, 317, 322, 325, 329, 331, 337

- Sport medicine, 215
- Sport participation, 23, 36, 46,
70–75, 78, 81, 82, 177, 179,
180, 184, 188, 203, 206, 234,
295
- adolescents, 29–31
 - adults, 31
 - children, 27–9
 - and education, 199
 - females, 33
 - geographical divide, 51, 52, 58,
59
 - and life transitions, 203–5
 - males, 33
 - metropolitan areas, 34
 - preschooler, 95
 - regional areas, 34
 - social divide, 58
 - social stratification of, 53–7
- Sport party-goers, 14, 288, 298
- Sport policy, 4, 8, 10, 11, 23–25, 28,
30, 31, 33, 35, 37, 38, 45, 46,
58–60, 72, 74, 81–83, 278
- history, 69–71
 - and mass sport participation,
196–8
- Sports, 159–60
- normative discourse of, 228–9
 - outdoor adventurous, 313
- Sports epidemiology, 24
- Sports infrastructure, 176
- promoting separation, 185–186
- Sports management, 24
- Sports newspapers, 187
- Sports pedagogy, 136
- Sports-active citizens, 196
- Sports-active parents, 202
- Sportswomen, 232
- Sport travellers, 14, 288, 297, 298
- Sporty Kids, 77
- State Masters/Veteran's Hockey
Titles, 286
- State Vet, 289
- women's hockey event, 290, 291
- Sterling, J., 149
- Stigmatisation, 78, 246, 308, 309
- Stress relief, 265, 269, 270
- Subcultures, 14, 284, 285, 288, 293,
298
- Successful aging, 318–322, 324
- broad approach to, 330–337
 - hierarchy of, 318
- Surveillance, 159
- Symbolic capital, 313n1
- Symons, C., 247–249, 251, 254, 255
- T
- Table cricket, 186
- Tacon, R., 160
- Talent identification systems,
117–129
- Technological advancements, in
sports, 190
- Technologies of government, 213
- Thompson, S.M., 234
- Timmons, B.W., 94
- Tinning, R., 136
- Tirone, S.C., 235
- Toddlerhood, 93
- Toddlers, 2, 5, 11, 16, 72, 73, 238
- Torres, D., 233
- Touch-footy games, 162
- Toxic fetal environment, 221
- Traditional outdoor adventurous
sports, 305
- Trainers, 215, 232
- Tramp stamp, 143

- Trampoline club, 181
- Transformative impossibilities of sport, for young disabled people, 183–185
- Transformative pedagogical project, in girls, 136
- Transgender, 13, 246–249, 256, 257
- Trauer, B., 288, 289, 296
- Turner, G., 163
- U**
- Ultrasonography, 218
- Unborn child, 12, 211, 212, 221
- Uneven playing field, 117–129
- Unfair treatment, 159
- Unhealthy lifestyles, 195
- Upper class white women, 220
- US Masters Swimming (USMS), 273
- USMS, *see* US Masters Swimming
- V**
- Valentine, G., 137, 151
- Vallerand, J.R., 269, 270
- Van Bottenburg, M., 51
- Van Tuyckom, C., 54, 59, 196
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), 24
- Visibility of disability, in sport, 176, 179, 180, 185, 186
- Visual impairment, 181, 185
- Visual methodologies, 138, 141, 151
- Voluntary risk-taking, 165
- W**
- Waddell, T., 246, 247
- Warde, A., 199
- Warren, L., 333
- Wattie, N., 121
- Wheelchair basketball, 179, 186
- White, P., 126, 127
- WHO, *see* World Health Organization
- Whole-population participation, lifespan, 36
- Wicker, P., 58
- Wild zones, 166
- Wilkinson, R., 205
- WMG, *see* World Masters Games
- WNBA, *see* Women's National Basketball Association
- Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), 234
- World Cyber Games, 7
- World Health Organization (WHO), 15, 196, 317, 331, 332
- World Masters Games (WMG), 5, 14, 78, 286, 287, 289–292, 294, 318, 323, 324
- World Masters Track and Field, 286
- Y**
- Yoder, D. G., 237, 238
- Young, B.W., 13, 14, 265, 266, 269, 270, 330
- Young children, 5, 13, 28, 29, 97, 100, 108, 109, 227–240
- Young disabled people, 12, 175–190
experience in Sport for All, 180–2
- Young people, 11, 12, 28, 31, 69, 79, 89, 136, 144, 149, 150, 156–161, 163, 165, 167, 168n1, 168n3, 180–182, 184, 196, 198, 201, 204, 304
in sport impacts, 135

Youth crime, 160, 161

Youthfulness, 297, 303

Youth seduction, 165, 167

Youth significance and childhood,
200–203

Youth workers, 156, 158, 159,
161, 162, 166, 167, 168n3,
169n7