




Psychosocial Predictors of Sport Retention in Youth with Intellectual Disability

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Acknowledgements

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Background

- The benefits of sport participation are substantial
- Attrition is common for youth without disabilities, with an average North American rate of 35% annually (e.g., Gould, 1987)
- Many challenges to sport participation for youth with Intellectual Disabilities (ID)
 - Exclusion, less access, sedentary lifestyle (Temple et al. 2006; Walsh, 2005)



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Objective

- So sport may be helpful, it is certainly valued by many
- *What keeps youth with ID involved in sport?*
- Longitudinal analysis over a 3 year period



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Special Olympics

- Commonly used at community levels
 - Proliferation of different streams to sport – Traditional, Unified, Active Start, etc...
- A number of psychological/emotional correlates, with less evidence for physical and intellectual benefits (Tint, Thomson, & Weiss, 2016)
 - Few RCTs
 - High risk of bias



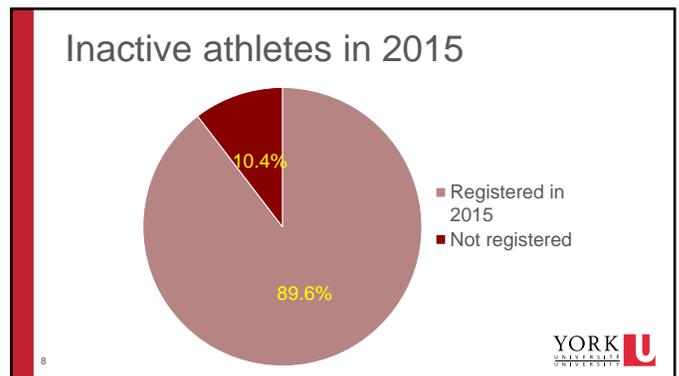
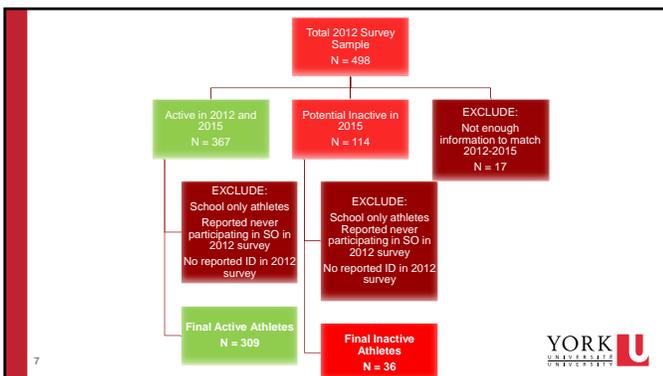
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Method

- Invite caregivers of all registered SO Ontario athletes 11-21 years of age to participate in survey in 2012 (N = 2400)
 - Of those who complete Time 1, who remains registered in 2015 database?
 - Time 1 n = 498, though with missing data
- All variables measured in 2012 (before dropout)



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What does not differ between groups?

- Athlete characteristics: Age, gender, level of independence, problem behaviours, diagnoses
- Parent and sociodemographics: Age, SES, income, level of parent support for physical activity
- Inclusion and participation **outside of SO**: Friendship quality, access to resources, level of participation outside SO
- Age when athlete first got involved in SO
- Total number of gold medals

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How are inactive athletes different?

Does your child participate in non-sport SO events (% yes)	p = .05
Frequency of SO participation in the last 12 months (5 point scale)	p < .001
Friendship quality in Special Olympics	p = .007
Overall Environmental Support Score in SO (%)	p = .03

Example of Supports / Barriers
Do the following things help or make it harder for your child to participate in SO (Not an issue / usually helps / sometimes helps / usually makes it harder):

- Physical layout, social demands, weather

Are the following available and adequate to support your child's participation in SO (Not needed / usually yes/ Sometimes yes / usually no)

- Transportation, information, equipment, money

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How are inactive athletes different?

Overall mean SO positive experiences (YES)	p = .004
Mean athlete-coach relationship score	p = .04

Examples of athlete-coach questions (4 items):
 My child is close to their coach(es)
 Coaches are committed to my child

Examples from Youth Experiences Survey SO (18 items):
Identity Experiences: Has improved their self-esteem
Initiative Experiences: Learned to physical push themselves
Emotional Skills: Has become better at handling stress
Interpersonal Relationships: Learned about helping others
Social Capital: Have become more connected with our community
Team Work: Has had the opportunity to act as a leader

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Discussion

- It is about experiences that differentiates
 - Athlete experience and sport specific factors rather than youth and family characteristics
 - And this is within an organization already developed to support youth with ID



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Meaningful psychosocial experiences



"I love that my son is part of the team. Community."
(Parent/Coach)



"They just finished and are celebrating! It's a good feeling to work hard and finish. They did a really great job."
(Parent/Coach)

Weiss, J. A., Burnham Riosa, P., Robinson, S., Ryan, S., Tint, A., Viecili, M., MacMullin, J., & Shine, R. (In Press). Understanding Special Olympics experiences from the athlete perspectives using photo-elicitation: A qualitative study. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*.



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Meaningful psychosocial experiences



"Really shows how much of a team they are. They all support each other, come together and are very enthusiastic. It's a very important part of practice."
(Parent/Coach)



"...Hanging out at practice"
(Athlete)



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Meaningful psychosocial experiences



"To see so many parents supporting their children and enjoying themselves as much as the athletes"
(Parent/Coach)



"This picture represents a typical Tuesday night practice-fun/fun/fun. That's what it's all about"
(Parent/Coach)



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Limitations

- At most a 20% participation rate at Time 1, likely less
 - Youth and family representativeness is limited
- Participants in SO may not represent typical youth with ID who struggle to seek sport or participate in other kinds of sport
- Lack of experimental design – Time 1 is not a baseline
- All caregiver report



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Discussion

- Coaches and parents can foster positive experiences and can play an important role in continued sport participation
- Understanding the factors associated with sustained active involvement in sports is critical for sport retention efforts
- It's not just about being involved vs. not: It's what your involvement is like (Tint, Maughan, & Weiss, 2016)



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Thank you! Questions?

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