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**Insight Grant 2018**

*Major Sport Events and Parasport Participation: Investigating Post-Event Opportunities and Experiences*

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The use of major parasport events to address social and structural inequities that exclude people from participating in sport and physical activity has been an ongoing debate. Yet research that examines these claims of positive long-term impacts on sport participation after hosting a major event is almost non-existent (Darcy & Misener, 2014; Misener et al., 2018; Taks et al., 2017). This focus of our SSHRC funded project is on this debate to consider post-event experiences of social and structural environments that were the focus of event-related improvements.

Scholars have demonstrated that sport events do not automatically render positive participation impacts (Weed et al., 2015), it is only through intentional efforts that sport participation outcomes can be realized (Taks et al., 2015). Continuing our longitudinal study, we situate our research on two events/cities: 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and 2015 Toronto ParaPan American Games. This phase of the study centres on engaging persons with disabilities in ongoing critical reflection dialogue using an online platform. The intent is to consider the multifaceted experiences around participation in sport. We have developed an accessible web-platform (Project Echo) for asynchronous focus group discussions to engage a multiplicity of voices for sharing stories (Bundon, 2016). We aim to engage in discussions about the multiplicity of sport participation experiences of multiple groups: a) elite participants; b) recreational participants; and c) non-participants. The online platform offers an opportunity for free-flowing dialogue about negotiating structural constraints, and management of social challenges. Clearly, the event impact is minimized in the discussions by the focus on other rights that are not addressed by the event or perhaps any strategy around sport participation.

The website was launched in early March 2020 just before the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns in Canada and Scotland. This presented an opportunity for our research to be part of a broader dialogue about negotiating physical activity and sport participation. Thus, we used the site as to engage in focus group discussions about the impact of COVID on access and opportunity for sport and physical activity. In this poster presentation, we will highlight the methodological challenges of this digital methodology (particularly during the pandemic), some insights about the ongoing impacts for persons with disabilities, and the future directions for this research project during this time of pivoting our research agenda.

Resource Centre (SIRC) and Sport Canada.