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Insight Grant 2018 *Major Sport Events and Parasport Participation: Investigating Post-Event Opportunities and Experiences*

Project Echo: Examining Post-Event Ripple Effects on Sport Participation and Recognition

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 two key areas: 1) engaging persons with disabilities in ongoing critical reflection dialogue using an online platform; and 2) conversations with facility managers focused on understanding how events impact recognition of disability and disability related issues. The intent is to consider the multifaceted experiences around participation in sport and the ongoing impacts post-event. The accessible web-platform (Project Echo) is being used 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 the first 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 have continued to use the site to engage in discussions about the impact of COVID on access and opportunity for sport and physical activity. In addition to the website, we conducted interviews with key management stakeholders in each city to understand more about the impact of events on recognizing disability. In this poster presentation, we focus on the findings from the manager interviews highlighting the value of the theoretical understanding of recognition to situate a social justice lens to event impacts, and we discuss the ongoing work around the Project Echo platform with the engagement of discussions about accessibility and inclusion in sport more broadly.
