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SOCIAL INCLUSION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY SPORT

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The social and community building potential of sport has been highlighted by social policy makers and academics both in Australia and overseas (Australian Sports Commission, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Collins and Kay, 2003; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007; Jarvie, 2003; Nicholson and Hoye, 2008; Rojek, 2005). There is a "presumption that sport can help to address the multifaceted aspects of social exclusion (e.g. reduce crime, increase employability, improve health) and contribute to community development and social cohesion" (Coalter, 2007: p. 19). In ethno culturally diverse societies such as Australia, with a vast array of ancestral identities, languages, and religions, sport has been strategically deployed to overcome the challenges of social exclusion and marginalisation among minority ethnic groups.

Both Government and non-government organisations in Australia have developed and supported programs that use sport as a social tool to build social inclusion, community harmony and social cohesion among diverse groups of people. According to the Australian government, "sport is an inclusive social phenomenon and provides opportunities for specific groups to feel a part of the community. In a multicultural society such as Australia, sport is an important mechanism, for bringing diverse groups closer together" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1999: p. 55). Sport has played an important social and cultural role in Australia, providing social glue which binds communities and creates a broader, more unified society (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007). However these potential advantages are related to access to sport and recreation opportunities, and these are influenced by social, cultural and economic factors which may affect participation patterns, particularly for disadvantaged and minority groups (Hanlon and Coleman, 2006).

The aim of this paper is to examine social inclusion and Muslim women's engagement in sporting contexts within Australian community

sport settings. Muslim women in this research, both migrant women and those born in Australia, are considered to be those who follow the Islamic religion. Research indicates that many women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Muslim women, are proportionately less active in sport and recreation activities in western countries, than the corresponding generic female population (Cortis *et al.*, 2007). A number of reasons have been put forward for this 'under-representation', such as non-inclusive practices of sport organisations, restrictive community attitudes and values, lack of appropriate venues and/or opportunities that allow culturally appropriate clothing to be worn, and scarcity of female only sporting environments (Hanlon and Coleman, 2006; Sfeir, 1985; Palmer, 2005; Walseth, 2006). Muslim women face many specific constraints and challenges to participation including: dress codes; inappropriate facilities; lack of role models; issues around parental approval; transport; the social side which may involve alcohol; communication and language issues; lack of women only sessions; childcare issues; possible socioeconomic barriers; other family commitments taking priority; lack of opportunities to work in sporting environments; safety and security concerns around avoiding racial motivated incidents; and lack of information about possible opportunities (Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2009). Additional constraints are found in aquatic environments both in indoor and outdoor pools, and in beach situations, these include: pool regulations concerning clothing; modesty issues; and practical clothing for swimming activities.

Studies regarding this matter have also identified specific religious requirements that present challenges for Islamic immigrants residing in non-Islamic countries (Dagkas and Benn, 2006; Deknop *et al.*, 1996; Kahan, 2003; Hargreaves, 2000). The lack of access to and provision of culturally inclusive sport environments in some western countries, such as Australia, has been identified as a critical factor in Muslim women's lower participation rates and lack of viable opportunities to engage in sport and accrue the benefits of participation (Taylor, 2003).

In a wide-ranging investigation of sports participation of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia, Cortis *et al.* (2007) argued that community sport organisations are in a good position to provide an environment which both encourages sport participation and also the social inclusion of Muslim women. They suggest that the achievement of social inclusion outcomes could be delivered through the social function of sport, relating to social integration and civic participation. It has also been argued that community sport can be used to construct women's individual and group identity and provide an avenue for Muslim women to become ambassadors for their community (Palmer, 2009).

Research shows that women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities experience feelings of belonging, and their experiences in other areas of society improve as a result of participation in sport (Walseth, 2006). This indicates that inclusion resulting in acceptance and belonging (markers for bonding social capital) can occur through community sporting opportunities (Maxwell and Taylor, 2010). The notion of 'social inclusion' of disadvantaged communities seen as on the 'outer', has been recently adopted in European, North American and Australian sport and leisure policy (Nicholson and Hoye, 2008). This adoption of social inclusion provides community sport with a platform to deal with societal issues, and provides opportunities for disadvantaged community members (Skinner *et al.*, 2008). However some academics also draw attention to the capacity of sports clubs to be inward-looking and actually contribute to social exclusion (Coffe and Geys, 2007; Groeneveld *et al.*, 2011). Groeneveld *et al.* (2011) suggest that an increase in trust amongst sports club members due to their membership could result in a corresponding rise in the level of distrust of members of other sports clubs or non-members.

This paper contributes to the empirical evidence about the facilitation of social inclusion processes in relation to sports participation and subsequently informs strategies to promote greater social inclusion of Muslim women in Australian society. The paper is concerned primarily with uncovering the ways that community sport develops and operationalises practices which facilitate the involvement of Muslim women who may have previously been excluded or marginalised. A social inclusion framework is employed in this research.

Social inclusion framework

Social exclusion links the social elements of exclusion to material deprivation and poverty and focuses on the processes of marginalisation (Baum and Ziersch, 2003). Exclusion according to this conception, can take many forms including lack of access to power, knowledge, services, facilities, choice and opportunity (Bailey, 2005). These can be related to a range of societal institutions including sport and recreation. There is a lack of a clear social exclusion/inclusion discourse throughout the literature (Collins and Kay, 2003). According to Collins and Kay (2003), the RED or redistribution theory (see Levitas, 1998), involving an emphasis on poverty as the main cause, focuses on the processes of impoverishment, and implies that a radical redistribution of power and resources is required to combat exclusion. This discourse involves distributive justice which widens opportunities for underprivileged members of society and acknowledges the importance of social justice in overcoming social exclusion. Social justice involves ensuring that all citizens have the access, opportunity and resources necessary to participate fully in all aspects of economic, social and cultural life (including participation in sport) in order to enjoy an acceptable standard of well-being.

In this section a social inclusion framework developed by Bailey (2005), from the work of Donnelly (1996) and Freiler (2001), is considered. Bailey (2005) provides some evidence of four potential elements involved in reducing social exclusion and promoting social inclusion. These elements or domains include access, agency, acceptance and capacity building. Firstly, access is proposed as a necessary condition of inclusion, the opportunity to participate is essential (Australian Sports Commission, 2006; Cortis et al., 2007; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007; Long et al., 2002). Secondly, the issue of agency is suggested, institutions need to allow marginalised groups to participate through allowing previously excluded people involvement in decision making (Cortis et al., 2007; Cowell, 2007; Crabbe et al., 2006; Long et al., 2002). Thirdly, the development of skills and the effect on self-esteem, confidence and peer acceptance is put forward (Amara et al., 2004; Cortis et al., 2007; Long et al., 2002); and fourthly, the process is most successful with effective, preferably local, leadership which assist with capacity building (Long et al., 2002; Cortis et al., 2007; Vail, 2007). These four elements can be seen as four connected dimensions or domains of social inclusion and provide the basis for Bailey's framework.

According to Bailey (2005), sports participants claim that inclusion occurs by: bringing together individuals with diverse backgrounds in a shared activity (spatial); offering a sense of belonging (relational); providing a chance to develop capabilities and competencies (functional); and by increasing community cohesion (power). Bailey proposes that this framework is extrapolated from the literature and that it provides a useful tool for considering sport's potential contribution to social inclusion/exclusion. In this paper, Bailey's framework is adapted in order to provide a structure to investigate the inclusion of Muslim women in community sport in an Australian context. As in Bailey's model, four key elements or domains are explored.

Firstly, the functional domain is considered which refers to the enhancement of knowledge, skills and understanding. Sport, according to Bailey, is claimed to provide opportunities for the development of valued capacities and competencies, and to contribute to the development of inter-personal and intra-personal skills. This functional element can be considered equivalent to human capital which is "created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways" (Coleman, 2000: p. 19). This potential for human capital development is explored through the social inclusion domain. Secondly, social inclusion is explored through the domain involving the locus of power. The process of a change in power and of empowerment of individuals' sense of control over their lives may come through extending social networks, increasing community cohesion and civic pride. These bridging and linking networks (or social capital) can generate broader identities (Putnam, 2000).

Thirdly, social inclusion is explored through a relational domain in the sense of social acceptance. The potential of sport to promote belonging to a team, club, or community, underlies this element (e.g. Walseth, 2006). This domain aligns with the concept of bonding social capital which is good for "undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity", while acting as a "kind of sociological superglue" (Putnam, 2000: pp 22–23) in maintaining in-group loyalty and reinforcing specific identities. Here the creation of belonging and acceptance, through close ties resulting in dense social networks, is examined. Fourthly, the spatial domain involves closing social and economic distance and bringing diverse individuals together around a shared interest (e.g. Bloom et al. 2005). This involves the notion of social cohesion which involves unity and individuals pulling together. These four social inclusion domains (spatial, relational, functional and power) seem plausible and are investigated in this paper through a variety of community sport settings.

Method

A case study method is adopted as it has been recommended as an effective means of exploring in-depth phenomena in sports organisations (Caza, 2000); Misener and Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006). Three case studies are selected for this research project. Criteria used to select the cases study organisations are: must be voluntary non-profit with a sporting focus; must be committed to gender equity, cultural diversity and community development objectives; and must be interested in engaging Muslim women. The additional criteria of maturity level is also employed, with each of the three organisations displaying a different level of maturity in terms of engagement of Muslim women. All cases allow an opportunity to learn more about the process of social inclusion. Each case is treated separately but approached in a similar way in order to allow a further final comparability.

The research was conducted between January and November 2009. Data collection and analysis includes secondary data such as annual reports, organisational strategies, government reports, organisational websites, media releases and newspaper articles. It also includes primary data generation and analysis consisting of individual interviews and focus groups with board members, managers, coaches, participants, stakeholders and advocates. Each of the three case studies is considered in some detail and is analysed and presented using the four social inclusion domains.

Case 1: Lakemba Sport and Recreation Club

This voluntary non-profit organisation has a culturally diverse membership including members born in Vietnam, Greece, Italy, Indonesia,

Lebanon and Australia; and in 2009 comprised 21% women and 79% men. Lakemba Sport and Recreation Club (LSC), situated in the Canterbury local government area of South Western Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, has an Islamic population of 13.7% (Canterbury City Council, 2009), compared to the Australian average of 1.7% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The non-Australian-born population in this area is 46.9% (Canterbury City Council, 2009), compared to 22% for Australia as a whole (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The vision of the LSC, according to its mission statement, is to promote participation in sport by addressing religious, ethnic, and social barriers.

LSC provides opportunities for female and junior soccer which are not available at the neighbouring community club, which caters only for male soccer. LSC has a long history, with over ninety years serving the community sporting needs of the local young people. Historically LSC has been dominated by an Anglo-Australian male membership which competed in football, cricket and martial arts. Over the last decade the organisation has changed dramatically, mirroring the changing demographics of the local area. LSC has become ethnically diverse across its sporting programs, with participants from a Vietnamese, Greek, Italian, Indonesian, Australian, and Lebanese background as well as a small number of refugees from the Sudan. The club has developed a strong community focus and provides affordable sporting activities by subsidising costs to local community members, including disadvantaged groups.

The processes leading to the social inclusion of Muslim women is evident through the narrative of the Lakemba Sport and Recreation club during period 2004–2009. These processes were discussed during individual and focus group interviews and evidenced in annual reports and newspaper articles. The evidence indicated that from the late 1990s to 2005 the club had in place few gender and/or culturally inclusive management policies or practices. There were some non-Anglo members involved in the club (e.g. as parents of Muslim boys) however, the inclusion of Muslim girls/ women as sport participants was minimal. The Muslim parents were generally unsupportive of Muslim girls/women playing soccer at the club. There was one soccer team in operation for girls, and the Muslim girls who played for the team were asked not to wear the Hijab (i.e. they were expected to assimilate in terms of their physical appearance). During this period the Muslim men and women in the community generally did not feel they could trust the club with their daughters. Local Muslim women had little involvement with the club. A non-Muslim female administrator describes the situation with Muslim girls: "Their parents didn't really want them to play ... which was probably due to lack of communication on the club's side of things ... they were dealing with two cultures all the time and a lot of them found it frustrating" (Organiser #7, personal interview, 11 March, 2009). Interviewees explained that during those years the club appeared to be internally focused and was trying to maintain historically successful programs and practices without due regard to the obsolescence of this approach within the changing community structure.

Agency domain

A change in leadership at LSC occurred in 2005, and two local Muslim community leaders joined the board. The new leadership introduced a number of changes resulting in an increase in young people from the local community joining the club. Interview and focus group data indicates that ties with the local community began to develop during this period. A board member described this process: "We approached the Muslim Women Associations and told them we wanted to have women in our club .... We developed contacts and relationships through community organisations, through the media, through Arabic radio and Arabic newspapers" (Organiser #1, personal interview, 30 January, 2009). The 2006 Annual Report and media articles from this period provide evidence that links were developed with local schools, community health services, mosques, community advocacy groups, the local Council and local businesses. The Muslim community leaders who had joined the CSO board explained how they used their existing community networks to encourage new members. Empowerment of Muslim club members can be seen to be developing.

Relational domain

Stronger evidence of trust, reciprocity, and feelings of belonging developing within the club from 2005 onward can be seen. Interview participants described how trust developed between LSC, and the local Muslim community developed through a strategy of incremental change. Board members of the LSC initially actively recruited Muslim girls from families who already had boys participating in club activities. Muslim parents who were interviewed reported that they felt able to trust the club with their daughters and were therefore willing to let them join the club. In the interviews, Muslim women noted that they began to feel comfortable and willing to help with club activities such as running the canteen and sharing transport. Displays of relational elements of social inclusion such as co-operation and trust between participants, between participants and organisers, between the organisation and stakeholders and between the organisation and advocacy organisations were described by several interviewees. A female Muslim participant noted: "We have a great relationship with our coach ... it's easy to trust her" (Participant #1, focus group interview, 19 January, 2009). A committee member explained how LSC encourages belonging and acceptance:

> They understand the cultural aspects. They provide leggings to wear under the shorts and a scarf for five dollars apiece. They get the parents down and involved in the canteen as they know that

the girls won't be allowed to play unless the parents are involved. A relationship like a rapport develops between the administration of the club and the players' parents and potential players' parents. With the Muslim women in particular there is a lot of mentoring. (Organiser #3, personal interview, 6 February, 2009)

The downside of LSC making such accommodations to engage Muslim women and stressing Islamic principles is that these moves may not be viewed as inclusive by other religious and cultural groups. An example of a non-Muslim woman feeling excluded is outlined by a former team manager: "It's very focused on Islamic principles, way too much for a sports club. I'm not involved this year because religion is too heavily involved" (Coach #2, personal interview, March 9, 2009). For this particular individual, LSC's focus made her feel uncomfortable within the organisation and led to her exclusion.

Spatial domain

The development of greater access which brings together individuals around a common interest began to occur from 2005 onwards. The data analysed indicates that the by 2008/9 LSC was regularly involved in reaching-out for new members in the local community through the use of community networks, advocacy organisations, gala days and community events. LSC started to adapt in order to bring Muslim women into the organisation. This facilitated the greater inclusion of Muslim women. Changes included adaptations to clothing and uniform, e.g. the Hijab was accepted as an element of the soccer team uniform. The importance and benefits of accommodating a flexible uniform which respects religious beliefs and at the same time preserves the collective identity of the team seems to be acknowledged. This action can be interpreted as an acknowledgement by the organisation that Muslim women's participation in sport is tied strongly to beliefs about the female body. Many of the women interviewed for this study explained that they needed to feel comfortable and relaxed in order to participate. Through these practices the club seems to demonstrate a respect for religious modesty and an accepted that women had diverse veiling requirements according to their interpretations of Islam.

Other adaptations included the development of girl's/women's-only training sessions, the development of women leaders and coaches, and the selection of women as coaches for the girl's teams. The development of the girls'/women's-only training night is explained by one of the participants:

There are different training days for girls and boys. Girls are on Tuesday nights and boys on Wednesday nights. We also have separate fields and the timings are different as girls are not allowed to be late. Girls have female coaches and they try to have female referees. The girls and women are made to feel comfortable as much as possible. If the coaches are male then the girls' parents will not allow them to play in the team. The club tries to keep all the parents happy, satisfied and comfortable. (Participant #4, focus group interview, 19 January, 2009)

These initiatives demonstrated an understanding that Muslim women often prefer single-sex participation which allows for rules concerning modesty and dignity. During individual interviews the parents of the participants explained that they were particularly keen that the club provided this differentiation for their sons and daughters. Additionally, culturally appropriate food was introduced to the canteen, including Halal meat and gelatine-free products, and consideration was extended to players during religious events such as Ramadan. An administrator elaborates: "In the canteen we put on Halal pies and Halal sausages ... non-Muslims used to buy these as well ... It helped our community. We had an issue with gelatine, because it involves animal bones. Other clubs now have also taken on Halal meat" (Organiser #7, personal interview, 11 March, 2009). These measures demonstrate how acceptance and cultural sensitivity has developed within the organisation.

A number of the Muslim women who initially joined the club to play soccer subsequently became coaches, managers and board members to participate in the fuller life of the club. A committee member explains: "Muslim women aren't outsiders, they are central in the club" (Organiser #2, personal interview 30 January, 2009). This more inclusive engagement of the local diverse community is illustrated by a community stakeholder who stated: "at the management level there are people coming from different backgrounds: Muslim, Indonesian, Lebanese, Greek, Italian and other backgrounds" (Stakeholder #1, personal interview, 6 February, 2009).

Functional domain

Interview and focus group participants described how Muslim women took on volunteer roles. Parents, friends, and former participants, volunteered to manage teams, helping with club administration, running the canteen and participating in first aid, coaching and referee training. A number of the Muslim women who initially joined the club to play soccer not only developed soccer skills but also subsequently developed coaching, and management skills as they began to participate in the fuller life of the club. This included opportunities for individuals to participate in leadership camps, and community coaching courses resulting in claims of increases in life satisfaction, and of improved skills and knowledge. Individuals participated in a number of government-sponsored community development projects, such as activities organised to promote

community harmony, sport development projects, community coaching initiatives, and sport leadership courses. In the interviews organisers noted that these opportunities had played a part in bringing in new resources, participants and skills into the organisation as well as providing individuals with opportunities to develop capacities, capabilities and new competencies.

Case 2: The Royal Life Saving Society of Australia

The Royal Life Saving Society of Australia (RLSSA), established in 1894, is a charitable community-based organisation with independent branches in each state and territory of Australia. The aim of the organisation is to develop community life savers and reduce drowning and aquatic related accidents. Over the last few years the RLSSA has been tailoring projects to meet specific cultural needs within the community. A number of strategies are employed to engage the Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and indigenous communities. In 2006, Muslim Aquatic Recreation Project was established to address needs within the Muslim communities of New South Wales and Victoria. A key aim of the Muslim Aquatic Recreation Project is to develop links between Muslim community members and groups and their local community aquatic facilities.

The RLSSA is using a community development model which involves: community aquatic recreation venues and their owners; engagement of community organisations; engagement of local community members; facilitation of a range of engagement, communication and participation activities; and possible training and employment outcomes. In summary, the goal of the project is to increase Muslim community participation in aquatic recreation activities through the development of sustainable relationships between community members and existing local aquatic recreation facilities (Royal Life Saving Society Australia, 2006). The barriers that Muslims face and the consequent need for such a project are illustrated in this comment: "A lot of Muslims do not take their kids to the pool, they fear they will have restrictions in terms of clothing and if the media gets hold of it then it may turn negative" (Program Officer #1, personal interview, 11 September, 2009).

Spatial domain

Respondents indicated that the development of female-only courses and sessions was central to Muslim women accessing the project. This was for modesty reasons, to allow participants to feel more relaxed, and also importantly for some of the more physical aspects of lifesaving training. The project tackled modesty issues in a number of ways, including adaptations to clothing and to the aquatic environment. This is reflected in this comment by a project officer: "We worked with local Councils to enclose pools for women-only sessions" (Program Officer #2, personal interview, 2 October, 2009). The issue of allowing appropriate clothing for both modesty and religious requirements was an important factor in the program. Project officers worked with local swimwear manufacturer 'Ahida' to encourage women to wear the new lycra swimwear which covered ankles, elbows and heads and was designed specifically as a practical, light-weight garment for swimming. This enabled women to participate as they could feel comfortable and safe in aquatic environments. Religious and cultural awareness were also included in the project, for example sensitivity to fasting during Ramadan, and project officers using Arabic where appropriate.

Functional domain

Courses were tailored to develop the capabilities of Muslim women by catering for their needs and interests in order to engage them. For example, the program included courses in first aid, basic CPR, learning to swim, and family fun days. There was a focus on capacity building within the Muslim community, with more Muslim women learning to swim and subsequently an increase in Muslim women as trained and employed lifesavers. A participant on one of the courses describes her experience:

> When I did my course I wasn't scarfed but there is always a way around it. I wore a wetsuit. I am scarfed now and I am the only scarfed lifeguard at Bankstown Council Pools. I do feel like a role model. My sister is doing the course next year. My friends in the community are alright with it. (Participant #3, personal interview, 6 November, 2009)

This comment indicates that this program has led to capacity-building within the Muslim community, illustrated by Muslim women becoming qualified in life-saving and going on to gain employment as lifeguards in public aquatic facilities.

Relational domain

The issue of belonging in this project was less obvious, perhaps because the project had operated for a short time only. There were a few comments describing a good relationship between the female trainers and the course participants and on-going relations which began as a result of the project. But feelings of belonging were not generally expressed.

Agency domain

The issue of empowerment through local leadership was identified as a crucial success factor within the organisation by both those developing the program and those participating in the project. RLSSA employed both Muslim men and women as project officers. The advantage of this was that these project officers already knew the local community, already had

networks and contacts and were trusted by local Muslim people. A comment by one of the project officers illustrates this point:

> With the three of us Muslim project officers approaching the local community, there was a feeling of trust ... the community also felt comfortable that we were delivering the course ... because we know that Muslims need to stop to pray. It would be awkward to explain this to someone who wasn't Muslim or familiar with this. We can cater for these issues because we know they exist. (Program Officer #1, personal interview, 11 September, 2009)

Case 3: Surf Life Saving Australia

Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) was established in 1907 for volunteer surf lifesavers. It is a voluntary non-profit organisation with over 130,000 members and 300 clubs across Australia. In 2000, the SLSA commissioned a research report into the changing face of the SLSA called 'Sound the Siren' to look at strategic planning and specifically to examine the reasons why the range of nationalities that make up the Australian population were not comparable to the membership of the SLSA. The report looked at barriers to ethnic Australians joining surf lifesaving clubs and strategies to boost the ethnic membership of the SLSA. This report was a precursor to the 'On the Same Wave Project' which was established in 2006 following the Cronulla disturbances of December 2005. The project is a partnership between the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Surf Life Saving Australia and Sutherland Shire Council.

The On the Same Wave project is designed to provide surf lifesaving with the opportunity to engage with a wide range of community groups from various cultural backgrounds. The aim of the project is to: promote cultural understanding in Australia; introduce people from minority groups to beach culture and safety; and increase and diversify the membership of Surf Life Saving. The project has involved over 40 different community groups from a variety of backgrounds including Asian, African and Middle Eastern. Over 1 700 people have received surf education and over 700 have attended surf awareness days. Surf Life Saving Australia state that they are using this project to increase so SLSA reaches outwards to the Muslim community

Spatial domain

The project was designed to actively encourage ethnic minority groups, including Muslim women, by going into the community and linking with local community leaders, local community organisations, and local schools. SLSA sought to develop awareness of surf lifesaving in the Muslim community. Project officers developed initial contacts through

focus groups, meetings with community organisations and community leaders. A Muslim community leader involved in the project explains how it was done: "SLSA tried to make an effort to understand other cultures and tried to understanding the importance of religious events and family commitments such as a relative going overseas for a pilgrimage and how they affect the participation of individuals. They tried to understand issues such as mixing the genders" (Advocate #3, personal interview, 2 October 2009).

Activities were designed to develop community harmony and used cultural intermediaries and cultural ambassadors to reach out into the Muslim community. Adaptations were made to include Muslim women and to provide for religious and modesty requirements so that Muslim women could be included: for example. incorporating the 'burqini' — the red and white surf live saving uniform adapted to cover the knees and ankles together with a hood— into the surf lifesaving uniform.

SLSA used community networks to try to promote a message of harmony on the beaches and inclusion in their clubs. A number of internal initiatives were developed as part of the program these included cross cultural training in clubs, a development of more inclusive welcoming practices, the production of cultural awareness resources and the employment of cultural awareness resources in individual surf clubs through the delivery of diversity projects. Included as part of the training resources is a DVD, as part of this presentation a project officer explains the approach that SLSA is trying to adopt:

> We are building on what we already have to actively include, to reach out to people. It's not special treatment; it's just a special welcome. People don't always feel welcome. Why do some people need a special welcome? Well some groups do because of our image. In the last year we have had images of culturally diverse people joining but often ... it's the image of a bronze muscular Aussie. It's also about past experience. Some people have had horrible experiences, like the story of the girl wearing the Hijab and on her way to university she was spat on. SLSA need to bear in mind that this could make a young girl more nervous when approaching people she doesn't know; and also there are the different cultural etiquettes. You need to bear in mind that there might be reasons people feel uncomfortable and we might not know what they are ... inclusion is not just about not excluding it is also about thinking of ways to actively include people. (On The Same Wave Project, DVD, training program presentation, 2007)

These cultural awareness resources were designed to break down stereotypical images of Australian surf life savers. A project officer explains: "We created posters that were visually engaging. With images of everyone who

is Australian today, from an Anglo-Saxon background to a Muslim, a Hindu or an Asian. Image is quite important" (Organiser, personal interview, 18 August, 2009). These resources also included multilingual recruitment brochures produced in the top ten languages spoken in Australia, including Arabic.

Functional dimension

To develop skills, life-saving competencies and to deliver appropriate training and other courses for new Muslim participants, SLSA partnered with local community organisations. Courses were subsequently delivered including: beach safety awareness; surf awareness; surf survival; surf rescue; the Bronze Medallion; and CPR courses. These courses were used to increase competencies and capabilities within the Muslim community, particularly in the areas of swimming and surf education. SLSA teamed up with Lakemba Sport and Recreation Club to train a group of lifesavers from an Arabic background to gain their Bronze Medallions. Seventeen of the starting twenty two were successful, including three Muslim women. These new members then went on to patrol the Sydney beaches.

Relational domain

Respondents described how SLSA developed trust with Muslim community members by opening up communication with both individual Muslim women and Muslim community groups, and through developing relationships with Muslim participants on various swimming and lifesaving courses. These relationships were improved through the growth of camaraderie and the team-building nature of the training. One of the Muslim women describes how acceptance and friendship developed for her through her experience training as a surf life saver:

> There was a bond created with the teachers and the instructors and with us. Once they got to know us they got to see what we were really like. Through bonds they were able to help us succeed. Because once you know someone it's easier to do something. We got to know them and developed a friendship and a close connection and they were able to help us ... overcome these barriers of our culture. It was a casual environment and it was a friendship thing. It wasn't very strict and hard. It wasn't cold, it was very friendly and open. They made it as if we could ask questions and we were comfortable. It was a very comfortable and warm atmosphere, where they encouraged questions. The feeling was kind of mutual. We asked questions and then they asked questions. It was like a 'hang out'. I became an active member, patrolling. I went every single month. I felt really welcome; you become friends with the team. (Participant #2, personal interview, 28 August, 2009)

Respondents went on to explain that the volunteering nature of SLSA helped relationships develop particularly through the life-saving training. In this quote the development of relationships and social capital is described by the same Muslim woman:

> Relationships were built because it was over a very long time ... a couple of months. If you are seeing someone on a weekly basis you develop a relationship with them and they became like friends with us and when I saw them on patrols I went up to them and considered them my friends, not just my teacher getting me through this. They became lifelong friends and networks that I can always use. (Participant #2, personal interview, 28 August, 2009)

Agency domain

Muslim women who participate in the life saving training were engaged as role models — e.g. Mecca, who after completing her 'Bronze Medallion' became the world's first Muslim Woman Surf Life Saver. This achievement highlighted opportunities for Muslim women, e.g. to become surf life savers, pool life guards, swimming teachers, aquatic centre staff, health promotion professionals. This 'role model effect' encouraged other female family members to learn to swim, and also had a wider role in promoting SLSA to the Muslim community as an activity that they too could participate in. Female participants explained that the development of the 'burqini' empowered them and allowed them to participate in the life-saving activities and to represent their communities.

Discussion

The findings across the three case studies indicated the nature of the processes which assist with the social inclusion of Muslim women in community sport. The use of a conceptual framework provided evidence of the interconnected nature of the relational, power, functional and spatial elements of social inclusion. Initial access to the organisation appears to be the essential first inclusion element which then leads to functional elements as individuals develop their competencies and skills, involvement in the organisations over time allows for the development of the relational elements of belonging which also leads to empowerment and further opportunities through the development of social capital via social networks.

Common elements in the three case studies indicate that for Muslim women the key elements of inclusion include the development of trust and belonging (relational aspects), access to the activities through accommodations for religious modesty and religious practices e.g. female-only

environments (spatial aspects), learning and skill development opportunities (functional aspects) and leadership and empowerment opportunities (power aspects). According to Tonts (2005) these improved life skills, team-building experiences and community service opportunities support the proposition that sport can build community identity and a sense of community belonging.

The use of a social inclusion domains approach is also useful in identifying practices which cut across all of these domains. One of these is the importance of accommodating a flexible uniform which respects religious beliefs (empowerment and spatial elements), preserves the collective identity of the team (relational element) and allows for skill development (functional element). The importance of accommodating a flexible uniform is noted in Palmer's (2009) study of young Muslim refugee women in South Australia. This action can be interpreted as an acknowledgement by the organisation that Muslim women's participation in sport is tied strongly to beliefs about the female body (Hargreaves, 2000). Many of the women interviewed for this study explained that they needed to feel comfortable and relaxed in order to participate. Through these practices, all three organisations are demonstrating that they respected religious modesty and accepted that women had diverse veiling requirements according to their interpretations of Islam.

Concluding comments

This study provides evidence which supports the social and community-building potential of sport and active recreation (see Coalter, 2007). Furthermore this research responds to calls for further studies into factors that shape, constrain and facilitate the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and communities in sport, with sensitivity to differences within these groups (Coakley, 2001; Walseth and Fasting, 2004). The study explores the unique and diverse cultural and religious requirements of Muslim women wishing to participate in community sport. Through making a number of adaptations to previous practices, the organisations are seen to be facilitating the participation of Muslim women and thus encouraging social inclusion to develop within the organisation. This finding is echoed by Cortis *et al.* (2007), and Maxwell & Taylor (2010). However the potential of these adaptations to also exclude participants from other cultural groups must also be acknowledged and prevented from occurring.

Social inclusion in the organisations is illustrated through the greater involvement of Muslim women in the clubs' sporting activities (spatial domain), in an improved sense of belonging to the club (relational domain), through the development and enhancement of skills and knowledge (functional domain), and through the development of a greater level of control within the organisation (agency domain). The three case studies illustrate also the different levels of maturity in terms of the social inclusion process. Different levels of belonging and empowerment are evident, these two dimensions appear to develop over time, however a more in-depth longitudinal study is required to fully understand these elements. The assertion that organisations can assist governments, policy makers and non-government organisations with the social inclusion of Muslim women in Australian society is given initial support here, however additional research is needed to confirm and elaborate on these findings.

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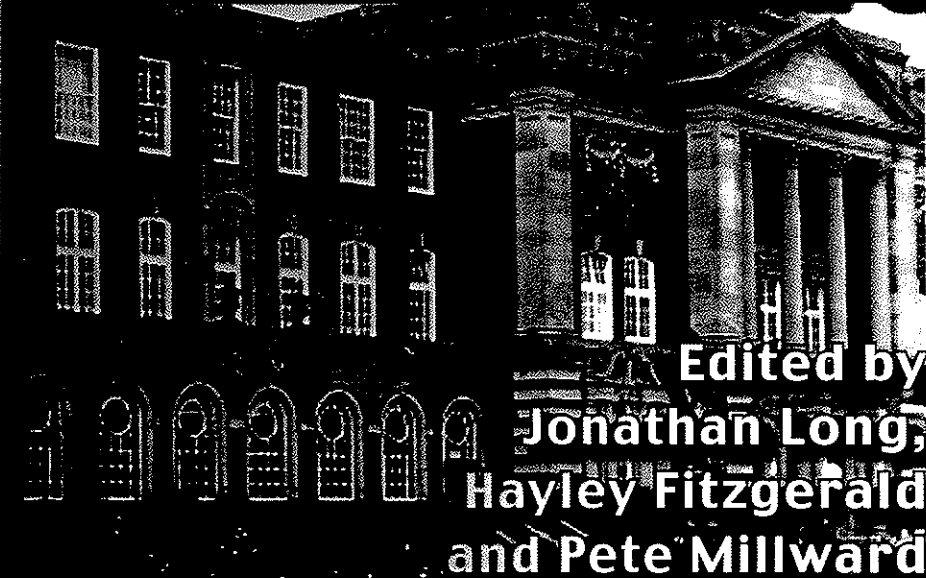Collins, M. and Kay, T. (2003) *Sport and social exclusion.* London, UK: Routledge.

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Delivering
Equality in Sport
and Leisure

Edited by
Jonathan Long,
Hayley Fitzgerald
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Caution
Changed
priorities

LSA

DELIVERING EQUALITY
IN SPORT AND LEISURE

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LSA

Delivering Equality in Sport and Leisure

Contents

DELIVERING EQUALITY IN THE ARENA OF SPORT AND LEISURE

This papers in this volume were presented in their original versions at the *Diversity and Equality in Leisure, Sport and Tourism* conference of the Leisure Studies Association, held at Leeds Metropolitan University in July 2010. The conference identified five major themes: Inclusion and Exclusion; Shifting Policy Discourses about Equality; Alternative Voices; Peace and Reconciliation; and Globalisation and Hybridity. There are two other parallel publications arising from the conference. One has focused on Identities, Cultures and Voices (Watson and Harpin, 2011); the other reviews policy and practice aimed at supporting Community and Inclusion (Ratna and Lashua, 2011). The conference strands that we develop in this volume involve considering how social processes and policies engender equality and inequality in leisure, sport and tourism as well as how these fields might contribute to (in)equality.

Acknowledging that in the UK chronic disadvantage and inequality persist despite 40 years of legislation, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) welcomed the Equality Act 2010 which sought to unify the provisions of 116 different pieces of earlier equality legislation[1]. The establishment of the Commission itself had brought together the operations of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission in the interests of promoting a fairer society.

Those pursuing equality in each of these arenas were concerned that the loss of focus would set back their efforts. That nervousness is easy to understand when there is so much still to achieve against their separate agendas in sport and leisure as in society at large. In the world of disability sport, for example, it is an uphill struggle even to get people to recognise that it is the Olympic *and* Paralympic Games that are being hosted in London in 2012. It would be unfair to the efforts of all those who have worked to promote equality to suggest that there has been no progress in addressing discrimination, but, as Gary Craig suggests in his contribution to this volume, it would certainly be missing the point entirely to give the

impression that it is a case of 'job done'. While people retain their prejudices and while there are systemic biases there is always a job to do.

Initiatives like *The Spirit Level* (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) have drawn attention to the damaging effects of inequality, the argument being that the greater the levels of income inequality in society the greater the social ills experienced by that society; once basic incomes have been secured a nation's wellbeing is determined more by relative deprivation than absolute incomes. Perhaps not a particularly new argument, the backlash that *The Spirit Level* prompted nonetheless demonstrated the political sensitivity of the issue. It becomes even more significant when taken in conjunction with recent research (Sturgis *et al.*, 2011) showing that poverty and inequality are far more likely than ethnic diversity to cause British people to be suspicious of their neighbours (thereby challenging the argument that pursuing policies of multiculturalism makes people suspicious of others in the community). Yet shortly before this introduction was written, the UK's Home Secretary scrapped legislation from the outgoing administration that would have required public bodies to assess whether the consequences of their policies were inequalities associated with class factors, with the expectation that they would improve outcomes in more deprived areas. The legislation is to be replaced by exhortations to fairness.

In one of the accompanying volumes (Watson and Lashua, 2011) Shibli analyses the most recent round of the Active People Survey and notes that non-white people are now more likely than white people to reach the Sport England target of 30 minutes of moderate activity through sport three times a week. However, he notes too that participation rates are still extremely low for some groups, notably Bangladeshi and Pakistani women. He might also have added that the apparent higher levels of participation by those who are not part of the white majority are because of a lower age profile. Rising participation levels and some measure of success by campaign groups, sports councils and national governing bodies have led some in sport to believe that equality battles in sport too have been won and we now need be less concerned to press the cause of equality (see, for example, the final report of the Independent Football Commission, 2008).

Apart from disagreements from those opposed to the principles of equality, there are, of course, philosophical differences about what should be taken to constitute equality. For some, an equality of opportunity should be the societal aim. This includes the broad spectrum of views which argue that socio-cultural obstacles (such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, social class position, religion, sexuality or disability) should not stop people gaining opportunities that would otherwise be theirs. In other words, only 'talent' should count (see Roemer, 1998). The egalitarian equality of outcome can be a radically different view, assuming that differences between levels of social, economic and cultural resources can be eliminated, or be

Beyond those who did not understand what all the fuss was about in the first place, there are many who think that it is time to move on from the 'race' agenda because the worst excesses of racism have been removed (see Craig, this volume). This kind of challenge, of course, is very familiar to feminists having to address the arguments of post-feminism. Something that we might usefully extend from the work of those exploring class and gender inequalities in sport and leisure to other dimensions of inequality is the primacy of power relations. Clearly we need to be wary of presuming that economic and cultural power lies with the state; as Spracklen points out (in Lashua and Watson, 2011), more and more power lies with a small number of transnational companies.

We continue to hope, as some writers (e.g. DePauw, 1997; Carrington, 1998; Dworkin and Messner, 2002) have argued, that sport and leisure need not be seen simply as a site of repression, but also one of resistance. Are there some forms of leisure and sport that are better equipped than others to promote equality? The role espoused for critical theory, of course, is not just to analyse, but to effect change. Whether or not there is significant change will depend upon whether the levers of power are challenged/disrupted. As Long and Spracklen (2010: p. 247) observe: "sporting authorities might be prepared to allow minority ethnic athletes to bring them success, or take action against a differently othered segment, like hooligan supporters, without allowing people from black and minority ethnic communities true equality within the corridors of power".

Much attention, or at least rhetoric, has been directed at the potential that various forms of leisure and sport have to facilitate integration, whether as a means of ensuring that Muslim minorities are not fomenting revolution or more simply to make sure that people who are otherwise disadvantaged do not get 'left out'. It remains a concern that resources seem only to appear once a problem has been identified (e.g. through rioting) as needing treatment.

In his review of *The Spirit Level*, Peter Taylor (2009) observes that since people started examining leisure they have been interested in inequalities of opportunity, access and participation. This is true, but the interest in income inequalities has always tended to be given less attention in leisure studies than class distinctions, and even those have been less apparent since the 1980s. Taylor then noted that despite this attention inequalities persist, just as they do in other aspects of society. Within the broader context of authenticity, ownership, colonialism, hegemony, inclusion, difference, social capital and participation, the papers in this volume are concerned with how inequality in its various forms is generated and might be redressed. They address issues of social justice and the practice of intervention. In this they reflect initiatives that are often piecemeal (introduced for the sake of being seen to do something) rather than structural and sustainable. These are the same sorts of criticism that have been

levelled at various initiatives over the past 40 years. Although different forms of inequality are addressed, this set of authors does not substantively consider disability, older people or sexual orientation; and all bar one of the contributions to this volume are from the UK. Clearly the context in other countries will vary, but many of the issues will be familiar.

The volume opens with **Gary Craig**'s incisive polemic on the policy climate for equality initiatives, particularly in relation to ethnicity. His critical analysis concludes that it is definitely *not* time to move on from a 'race' agenda as there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that structural and individual racism persist, that we need to stop blaming the victims (minority ethnic groups) and to recognise that what segregation does exist is largely enforced. This paper paints the landscape for us as we work in and participate in sport and leisure. **Hazel Maxwell, Tracy Taylor and Carmel Foley** examine the proposition that inclusive sporting opportunities offer a mechanism for encouraging diversity and thereby promoting social cohesion. They do this in the context of initiatives by community sport organisations in Australia to engage Muslim women. The evidence from their three case studies suggested that sport and active recreation can indeed help social and community building when there is sensitivity to difference and the minority groups themselves are involved in delivery.

In discussing class dimensions in football **Jack Fawbert** identifies how the marketisation of the game requires a more affluent fan base than dominated most of the 20th century. Even though there is geographical variation fans at the club with the lowest income levels are still 20% above the national average. But Fawbert suggests that in class terms the picture isn't quite as simple as it first appears. The majority of fans originally came from working class backgrounds; it is just that many of them have better jobs. For some this is because of genuine social mobility and for others because of industrial restructuring changing the nature of the workplace such that many in the working class now have non-manual jobs.

Switching sport, **Tom Fletcher** draws upon qualitative data from his recently awarded Doctoral thesis to understand how English cricket cultures have been made, negotiated and resisted in the context of post-colonialism. He explicitly details the accounts given by British-Asian players to make sense of the cultural inequalities provided by exclusionary uses of imagined, and elastic, national boundaries to argue that the association between sport and globalisation is complex and contradictory, not least because of the strict local mythologies that exist.

Shia Ping Kung, Girish Ramchandani and Peter Taylor use data from Sport England's National Benchmarking Service to probe issues relating to customer satisfaction with the services offered in sport facilities across 87 public centres. In doing this, the service dimensions investigated include: access, value for money, quality of facilities, cleanliness, food and

that are easy to please and second, those that are more discerning — and in doing this uncover a new form of market segmentation that has—concrete implications for future sport facilities services.

Kate Hughes addresses attempts to use a major event, the Women's European Football Championship in 2005, to redress some of the gender imbalance in football by stimulating interest in the game among women and girls. There was another agenda in terms of trying to use the volunteers programme and special projects to reach those in disadvantaged communities in particular. Hughes uses the critical success factors identified by Smith (ECOTEC undated) to appraise the success of the tournament beyond the pitch.

Dulce Suassunna and Alfredo Feres Neto use secondary data analysis techniques to illustrate how policy shifts in Brazil have created new programmes in sport and leisure (focusing upon the *Sport and Leisure Program*). In their chapter, they find that the construction of those who take part in the initiatives is shaped by demographics such as sex, age, education, length of stay in the program, participation in training, knowledge of the principles, guidelines and objectives of the program, participation in meetings and educational training; and argue that such services need to be improved and refined to gain a long-term future.

The development and outcomes of a leisure-related programme are also discussed by **Phil Binks, Bob Snape and Liz Such**. They consider a multi-agency health-based programme called *Re-shape*, and focus in particular on a case study situated in Blackburn, England, that aimed to increase physical activity and healthy eating among British South Asian women. Binks, Snape and Such draw on interview data with the leaders attempting to facilitate the planning and delivery of the programme and explore the various challenges and opportunities encountered. In concluding, they highlight that working in partnership can enable new community-relevant forms of physical activity provision to be developed.

The theme of programme development continues to be discussed by **Susie Brown**, who focuses on the evaluation of the TOP Activity resource within an exercise and health programme targeting overweight young people. Brown presents qualitative data generated from a range of people who used the TOP Activity resources including exercise trainers, young people and parents. The data presented draws attention to a number of developments and issues that could be considered in order to improve these resources. More broadly, the chapter draws attention to the importance of social comfort in encouraging overweight young people to participate in exercise and health programmes.

In her paper, **Kim Polistina** focuses broadly on sport and initially outlines the ways in which dominant features of sport differ from those emphasised through the activities and values associated with holistic

that has drawn it into Western sport development frameworks. She urges that this process of colonisation has weakened the potential for HOL to be used as a vehicle for social change for sustainability and global citizenship.

Jonathan Long, Hayley Fitzgerald and Pete Millward

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Note

1   http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/ summary-of-our-response/

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Dr. Kim Polistina is manager/proprietor of "Symbiotic and Sustainable Systems" (an education, research and consultancy organisation for sustainability, global citizenship and outdoor learning). She has experience in community-based learning and adult education and has published papers in this and related areas. As lecturer she has contributed to the development of the outdoor learning, sustainability and global citizenship in UK and Australia. She has research and personal interests in lifelong outdoor and environmental learning, sustainability and global citizenship, sustainable lifestyles, outdoor leisure, sustainable health and well-being.

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Dr. Liz Such is a Senior Lecturer in Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity at the University of Bolton. Her scholarly interests lie in the field of social policy. She has worked on projects and published on the topics of family life, childhood, leisure, lifestyle, the labour market and social disadvantage. She is currently working on the policy-relevant topics of well-being and civic action. Liz has worked as a policy and research analyst inside the UK government and in the HE sector. She is book review editor for the journal *Leisure Studies* and most recently published: 'The leisure dimension of 'involved fatherhood' in the LSA no.110 publication *Leisure Identities and Authenticity*, L. Mansfield and D. Chatziefstathiou (eds).

Peter Taylor is Professor of Sport Economics and co-Director of SIRC at Sheffield Hallam University. Previously he was Professor of Leisure Management and head of the Leisure Management Division at the Management School of the University of Sheffield. Peter is an invited director on the Board of Directors for 'Phoenix Ltd', the operating company for the English Institute of Sport Sheffield, a £28 million facility. He is founding editor of Managing Leisure: an international journal. Since 2000, Peter has been the technical manager for Sport England's National Benchmarking Service for Sport and Leisure Centres.

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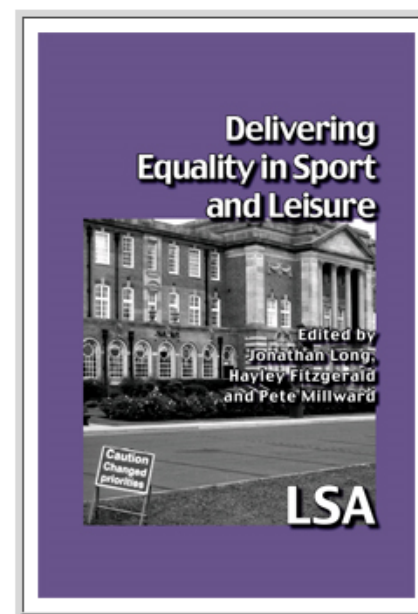Non member ~ £39.00
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