

Organizational Practices and the Engagement of Muslim Women in Community Sport

Hazel Maxwell, University of Technology Sydney
Tracy Taylor (Advisor), University of Technology Sydney
Carmel Foley (Advisor), University of Technology Sydney
Christine Burton (Advisor), University of Technology Sydney

Diversity **Friday, May 31, 2013** **20-minute oral presentation**
Abstract 2013-095 **8:55 AM** **(including questions)**
(Room 410)

The role of sport in promoting equity through social inclusion has been anecdotally linked to the promotion of social integration, social justice, and the development of social capital within society. However, evidence linking social inclusion outcomes to community sports participation is limited, particularly in regard to women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the Australian context. There is, nonetheless, evidence linking community sport to social exclusion, division, social disintegration, loss of trust, loss of community co-operation, and feelings of alienation for some marginalised individuals and groups (Coalter, 2005; Elling & Claringbould, 2005; Tonts, 2005). Women from culturally and linguistically diverse groups have long been identified as a marginalised group, with their systemic under-representation in community sport linked to non-inclusive practices of sport organisations, restrictive community attitudes and values, and a lack of culturally appropriate opportunities for participation (Benn, Dagkas & Jawad, 2011; Cortis, Sawrikar & Muir, 2007; Foley, Taylor & Maxwell, 2011).

In the Australian context, despite a groundswell of policies, programs and other initiatives that have been put in place to address these matters, program outcomes have not been meticulously evaluated. Firm evidence of good practice in successful inclusion programs is required. This paper explores practices of social inclusion/exclusion in an Australian community sport setting. In particular, it aims to document the case of Muslim women living in a suburb of Sydney, and their relationship to a community sporting organisation. The paper explores how organisational policies, practices, programs and projects facilitate and/or inhibit the social inclusion of Muslim women.

An 'interpretive' qualitative research methodology was employed. A case study approach was adopted and information concerning inclusionary/exclusionary practices was developed through interviews, focus groups, secondary data and documentary evidence. Drawing on the work of Bailey (2005, 2008) the analysis employed a social inclusion framework encompassing spatial, functional, relational and power dimensions. The social inclusion framework represents both transformative and multi-dimensional processes that facilitate excluded non-participants to become participants and to become more engaged and reap greater benefits. The model can be applied at either the individual or organisational level. In this study an organisational level analysis is undertaken to investigate the dynamics of social inclusion in community sport for a specific minority community population, Muslim women.

Findings indicated a range of practices which facilitate social inclusion, including: flexible dress codes and the provision of Islamic sportswear; gender segregation at training and the provision of female coaches and referees; employing culturally sensitive facilitators to liaise with Muslim families and encourage the participation of women and girls; provision of culturally appropriate food and non-alcoholic beverages at games and social functions; opportunities to build competencies; portraying positive images of Muslim women and providing role models; assistance with financial costs and transport; team building activities within the club; and building partnerships with external organisations. These practices provided physical, social and economic access and a sense of belonging for the many Muslim women who become involved in the sporting setting as players, coaches, managers and administrators over recent years. Relational inclusion from the Bailey framework emerges as a prominent theme in the sporting setting, particularly the negotiation of Australian Muslim cultural identity and the development of cultural capital for individual Muslim women. Paradoxically, some of the practices that contributed to social inclusion for Muslim women resulted in social exclusion for some non-Muslim women.

Examining each practice from the multiple perspectives provided by the social inclusion framework allowed a thorough analysis to be made of each organizational practice in relation to Muslim women. The adoption of the social

2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

inclusion framework enables an understanding the social inclusion/exclusion of Muslim women and provides an opportunity to build on existing sport management knowledge concerning social inclusion/exclusion in community sport contexts (Amara et al., 2004; Coalter, 2007; Dagkas & Armour, 2012; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Long et al., 2002) and to expand our understanding of how cultural diversity can be managed in community sport contexts (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Foley, Taylor & Maxwell, 2011). As a result of this research a need to explore how to ensure the social inclusion of specific marginalised groups without excluding other social groups in community sport and other contexts has been highlighted. An improved comprehension of the dynamics of social inclusion, including the complexities and nuances of inclusion processes indicates that inclusion is facilitated through a balance between actions which celebrate diversity and those which highlight differences.

References

- Amara, M., Aquilina, D., Argent, E., Betzer-Tayar, M., Coalter, F., Green, M., et al. (2004). The roles of sport and education in the social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees: An evaluation of policy and practice in the UK. Loughborough, UK: Loughborough University and University of Stirling, Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy.
- Bailey, R. (2005). Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. *Educational Review*, 57(1), 75-89.
- Bailey, R. (2008). Positive youth development through sport. In N. L. Holt (Ed.), *Youth sport and social inclusion* (pp. 85-96). London: Routledge.
- Benn, T., Dagkas, S., & Jawad, H. (2011). Embodied faith: Islam, religious freedom and educational practices in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 16(1), 17-34.
- Coalter, F. (2005). The social benefits of sport: An overview to inform the community planning process, Research Report 98. Edinburgh: sportscotland.
- Coalter, F. (2007). *A wider social role for sport: Who's keeping the score?* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Cortis, N., Sawrikar, P., & Muir, K. (2007). Participation in sport and recreation by culturally and linguistically diverse women, consultation report: For the Australian Government Office for Women, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. University of New South Wales, Social Policy Research Centre.
- Dagkas, S., & Armour, K. (2012). *Inclusion and exclusion through youth sport*. London: Routledge.
- Doherty, A., & Chelladurai, P. (1999). Managing cultural diversity in sport organizations: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 13, 280-297.
- Donnelly, P., & Coakley, J. (2002). *The role of recreation in promoting social inclusion*. Toronto, Canada: Laidlaw Foundation.
- Elling, A., & Claringbould, I. (2005). Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the Dutch sports landscape: Who can and wants to belong? *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22, 498-515.
- Foley, C., Taylor, T., & Maxwell, H. (2011). Gender and cultural diversity in Australian sport. In J. Long & K. Spracken (Eds.), *Sport and challenges to racism* (pp.167-182). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Long, J., Welsh, M., Bramham, P., Butterfield, J., Hylton, K., & Lloyd, E. (2002). *Count me in: The dimensions of social inclusion through culture, media and sport* Leeds Metropolitan University, Centre for Leisure and Sport Research.
- Tonts, M. (2005). Competitive sport and social capital in rural Australia. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21(2), 137-149.