Major Parasport Games Impact: A Legacy of Recognition?

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Research Problem and Objectives. Major parasport games have the potential to bring awareness to sport participation opportunities for people with disabilities (Chalip, Green, Taks, & Misener, 2017). Parasport games planners assume that through the hosting process, a level of disability awareness is generated towards the event by means of leveraging initiatives, program adaptations, and venue accommodations (Misener, Taks, Chalip, & Green, 2015). In the post-games era, it is important to examine how aware sport stakeholders remain in their attitudes towards strategic initiatives, adaptations and/or accommodations to determine the broader impact. To explore the levels of disability awareness among sport stakeholders, this research employs a theoretical construct of recognition as a novel approach to assess the event legacy and social impact of hosting parasport games.

Conceptual foundation.

Critical disability research when applied to the field of sport and event management builds upon the assumption that stakeholders possess a basic awareness of disability; along with a fundamental level of respect for, and knowledge of, the adaptations and accommodations needed to deliver parasport programming. The legacy and impact of a set of games can be expressed in the continued recognition of games-related adaptations and accommodations. Honneth’s theory of recognition is emancipatory in nature, highlighting the imbalances of power, trust, respect, participation and reciprocity among sport stakeholders (Barton, 2005; Honneth, 2007). Ongoing stakeholder recognition of disability in the legacy outcomes of the mega events implies that there is an esteemed value through a mutual and embraced idea of sport being an impetus for positive social change (Honneth, 1996; Silvers, 1999).

Methods. The focus of this project is on the post games era of the 2015 Parapan American Games in Toronto, Canada. Onsite interviews are being conducted (while walking through a venue facility) with twelve program managers in the Toronto area. We use an interpretive descriptive approach which sees the research problem as residing within two or more conceptual, action and value related factors (Thorne, 2008). Consistent with this method, a form of critical discourse analysis is used to “account for the roles of language, language use, and (in)coherence and the communicative uses of texts in the (re)production of dominance and inequalities in society” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). This analysis technique helps identify the social structures and attitudes that promote an ongoing recognition of disability in the post-event legacy outcomes.

Discussion and Implications.

The presentation of findings focuses on the ways in which the novel construct of recognition helps to brings to the surface the language, perspectives and attitudes of stakeholders in the post-parasport event era. It highlights the challenge of understanding event impacts from a singular perspective. This critical disability research will contribute to the sport management field by demonstrating the value of the novel conceptual framework of recognition to examine sport event impacts. This research has practical implications by encouraging sport managers, organizations, and institutions to better gauge the depth of disability awareness in their legacy planning initiatives and the ongoing recognition in the subsequent delivery of hosting outcomes and impacts.