



Non-disabled 10-12 year old children's lived experiences of a wheelchair basketball programme delivered in the East of England.

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Presentation Outline

- Background: Physical education and disability sport
- Study Context: The 'Wheelchair Sports programme'
- Results and Discussion: Challenging perceptions of wheelchair sport (and disabled bodies?)
- Conclusions: Changing attitudes to (some) disabled bodies



Disability Sport & Physical Education (P.E.) in the UK

'All pupils should have access to physical education and disability should not be a barrier to inclusion in sport programmes.'

(DCMS, 2000, p.30)

- Focus on 'inclusion,' although the meaning of this term remains debated (Barrow, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2012). Not Integration!
- PE rarely offers disability sport to non-disabled children (Brown, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2005; Howe, 2009)
- The formal spaces of PE can be a site of control, discipline, gendering and shaping practices that contour and control students' bodies and normalize 'ability' (Kirk 2003): Can exclude disabled children

Studies of disability in PE

'It's like I feel like he's looking down on me and he doesn't care and he sees my chair and all things I can't do.'

(Fitzgerald, 2005, p.53)

- Exclusion takes many forms
 - Medical (disability as illness): Perceptions of disabled bodies/abilities with low physical capital
 - Individualized (disability as tragedy): A habitus of exclusion?
 - Social (stigmatized disability): Marginalisation in the field of PE.

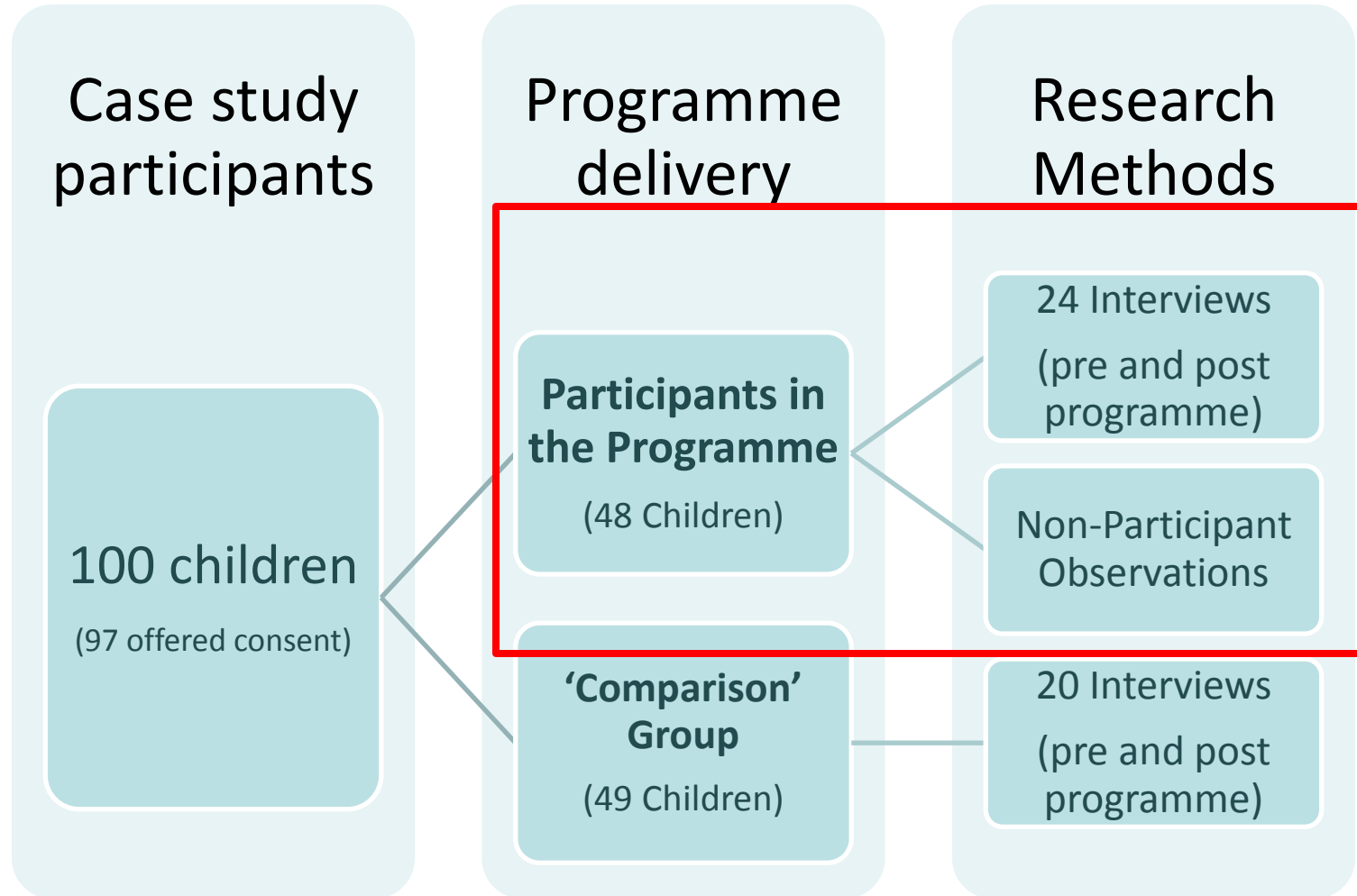
The Programme

- Lincolnshire Sports Partnership (LSP) supplied wheelchairs to schools for a 12 week period
- Their goal:
 - Qualified coaches delivered Wheelchair Basketball sessions during ‘normal’ P.E sessions to **‘raise awareness’** of disability sport among non-disabled pupils aged between 10 and 12 years
- Our role: Independent researchers conducting a case study.
 - Evaluation of the programme across the county
 - Sociological Investigation of children’s embodied experiences in one school

Study Aim

- Bourdieusian Framework used to investigate participants' embodied experiences and changing perceptions of wheelchair basketball...
- **Perceptions** prior to participation in the programme regarding disabled individuals and disability sport: Embodied Capital in the field of PE.
- Investigate the **physical sensations** and the **embodied experiences** participants encountered during the programme: Hexis & Habitus Clivè?
- Based on participant's experiences, we investigated participants' **attitudes** individuals held **following the programme** regarding disabled individuals and disability sport.
 - Were children reflexive about their assumptions about disabled bodies and Wheelchair Basketball in the field of P.E.?

The Study



Pre-programme Results: Othering the disabled body

- Limitation of 'Other' disabled bodies

- Focus upon physical disability as low physical capital
- Absence of psychological or mental impairments

*'My dad says I'm not allowed to watch [the **Paralympics**] because if I did it would **freak me out** and it wasn't like the **real Olympics**'*

Simon, male participant

- Sympathy for 'medical' symptoms

- Disabled bodies were 'othered' by emphasis of the tragedy of disability and of 'inferior' abilities: Illness, impairment, limits

*'I **feel quite sorry** for them, because it **couldn't have been their fault**, but someone else could have done it and then they're **stuck** with it for the **rest of their life**'*

Emma, female participant

Pre-programme Results

- Othering abilities: 'Easy,' worthless

*Yeah, in like **normal** basketball they can do slam dunks and stuff, and run around, and **do something really interesting, but then [disabled individuals] are just sat down.***

Sam, male participant

*In, like, wheelchair basketball they're not using their whole body, **just using their arms** to power their whole body, but then when I'm playing football, **you have to use every bit of your body** to move around.*

Matthew, male participant

Participant Observation data

- Frustration at complexity and new skills

“**You have to think about so much** stuff, how to move to get the ball, how to move when you get it and stuff, it’s really difficult.”

Beth, female participant

- Physical demands

“My arms and back are killing. **It’s really tiring** moving because you have to use both arms all the time [in the wheelchair].”

Mary, female participant

- Dis-engagement

- ‘Cheating’ by reverting to established embodied actions (e.g. standing in chairs, trapping the ball with feet)



Post-Intervention Results

- Emphasizing similarities

*'No offence, but I used to like look at them and think, they're **not one of us**. And now, they **are like us**, they're us just [impaired]....'*

Simon, male participant

- From general perceptions to embodied sensations. Expressing Empathy: But still sympathetic?

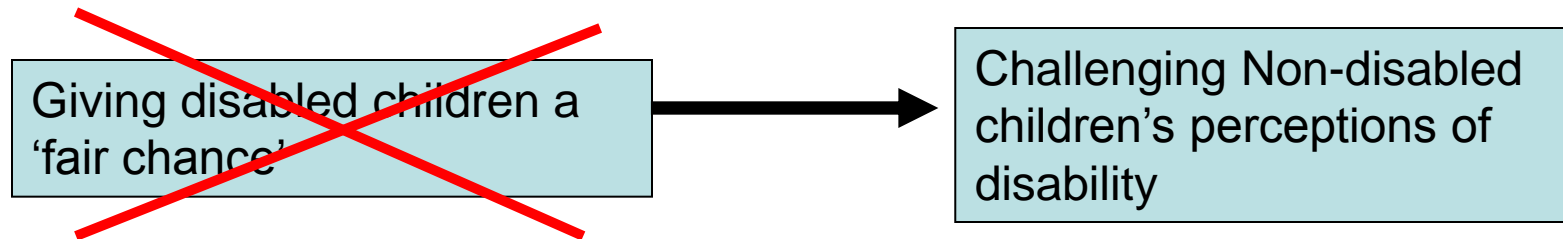
*'I **understand** more like **how they feel** and how annoying it is to be in a wheelchair, even though I was only in it for a little bit and I **could get out and walk.**'*

Maggie, female participant

Post-Intervention Results

- Re-evaluating 'ability'? Built upon lived experience
*'You think oh, its **easy**, just wheeling chairs about, but when you actually get in the wheelchair **it's really tough**...you have to be proper good'*
Anne, female participant

- Unintended consequences:



Conclusions

- Embodied experiences during the programme were key to affecting relection:
 - Adapting to a new way of ‘knowing’ the body and it’s capabilities when in a wheelchair
- Experiences challenged internalized perceptions of disability sport
 - Re-evaluating ‘ability’ and physical capital in PE
- Short-term change in values & limited to a specific set of experiences: Only physical impairments in the lower limbs

*‘Sometimes **you think** disabled people **can’t do this,**
and can’t do that **but actually they can.**’*



Thank you for your time....

Any questions?

Selected References

- Evans, A. B., Brown, L. J. and Bright, J. L. (2013). 'Non-disabled secondary school children's lived experiences of a wheelchair basketball programme delivered in the East of England.' *Sport, Education and Society* (DOI 10.1080/13573322.2013.808620).
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