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“Is Social inclusion through PE, Sport and PA still a rhetoric?” Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion.

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Abstract

This Special Issue is part of *Educational Review's* Hall of Fame, comprising the journal's most read and highly cited papers. As part of this I will be critiquing a milestone paper within the field(s) of Sport; PE and (I will extend to) PA by Professor Richard Bailey. The paper has been amongst the most-cited in the journal and I have personally cited the paper numerous times in my own work thus far. Upon its original publication (nearly 13 years ago), the article (managed to provide a very useful distinction between PE and sport (and PA), which is important given the constant slippage between the terms in many articles since. In this response article, I will try to provide a brief summary of the paper from Bailey, but at the same time examine closely the notion of social inclusion through sport and PE by summarising work that has subsequently been conducted. I will conclude by summarizing that some 13 years later spurious claims about effective inclusive practices through sport abound, and we still lack clear evidence to support the rhetoric about the ways in which sport and PE can contribute to social inclusion.

Introduction

Sport, Physical Education (PE), physical activity (PA) and health are issues that have been prominent in the UK policy landscape for the past decade. There has also been a lot of debate with regards to the status of PE in schools and its role in combating childhood obesity (Bailey 2012) and inactivity. Bailey's paper, when it was published in *Educational Review* in 2005, was pivotal to the way that we (scholars in the field of Sport and PE) started to conceptualise the notion of social inclusion and inclusive practices through sport and PE in general. Few anecdotal papers were published by that time with regards to social inclusion and it is significant that Collins and Kay's (2003) monograph book on Sport and Social Exclusion was cited heavily by colleagues in the field. Bailey's paper was (and still is) one of the highest cited papers in *Educational Review*. As part of this Special Issue and also within this paper, I will discuss Bailey's paper and its contribution to the field of studies of Sport, PE and PA but also expand on how social inclusion research has highlighted some important social justice issues that remain unattended to, mainly concerning issues of race, ethnicity, culture, gender disability, religion and sexuality.

The distinctions between PE/Sport, exercise and PA, as given in the paper by Bailey (2005), were important since there has always been a blurred line between the notions of physical activity (PA), sport and exercise (movement) in the writing of many scholars in the field, but equally importantly in the language that many policy makers have used with regards to PE and sport. It is crucial at this stage to define sport, PE, PA and health, echoing those definitions given by Bailey (2006, another early milestone paper written by Richard), but also taking into consideration recent developments in the field.

As such, I maintain that sport to me means, to quote Bailey “a collective noun and usually refers to a range of activities, processes, social relationships, and presumed physical, psychological, and sociological outcomes” (2006, 397) . According to Bailey (2006, 397) “Physical education” is used to refer to that area of the school curriculum concerned with developing students’ physical competence and confidence, and their ability to use these to perform in a range of activities”. According to the WHO (2015) and Bailey et al. (2013), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Finally, PA has been described as bodily movements by muscles that result in energy expenditure above resting levels, with exercise being termed as a subset of physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive (Hardman and Stensel 2009).

Reflecting on Bailey’s (2005) paper in the current climate, the notion of PE and sport as a panacea for effective social inclusion, solving communities’ cohesion and integration, has been anecdotal. Coackley (2011) when discussing the role of sport for youth development questioned the role of sport as an effective activity for solving social problems and improving quality of life for people and their communities. Specifically, Coackley reflected on Giulianotti’s (2004 cited in 2011, 307) term of “sport evangelists” as those that ...view sport in essentialist terms and assume that it inevitably leads to multiple forms of development, including remediation for individuals perceived to need reformative socialization and revitalization for communities perceived to need an infusion of civic awareness and engagement. (307)

It is evident from recent sport policy developments globally that it is due to those “sport evangelists” that the notion of the “inherent good” of sport for social inclusion, cohesion, integration and youth development has permeated national and international policy. The notion has gained momentum, contrary to some research evidence with regards to the panacea of sport (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas and Fisette 2016; Coackley 2011)

In my edited book *Inclusion and Exclusion through Youth Sport* (Dagkas and Armour 2012), we introduced the term ‘*pedagogies of exclusion*’, which was used to refer to specific pedagogical environments and discourses that can act as barriers to youth participation and engagement in sport, PE and PA. A range of characteristics is implied in the development of ‘*pedagogies of exclusion*’ such as economic resources, gender, race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality. Formal pedagogical environments are identified as barriers to youth participation in/from/through sport, and pedagogies of exclusion are related to the quality and nature of teaching, for example, the syllabus, teachers’ attitudes and knowledge, and issues linked to coaching and parental supervision. I will draw on some of them later in this paper, especially the notion of race and ethnicity and the language associated with these concepts as elements of social exclusion (and non- inclusion) in youth sport and PE. In addition, health related motivations for sport and/or physical education have arguably decreased the potential for inclusivity, with the situation being much more dire now than back in 2005; in fact, it is challenging to find a program that doesn’t link its outcomes to health-related matters. Health-related motivation for sport and PE blossomed in the years after 2005, which in effect decreased inclusive possibilities (see Macdonald and colleagues work on the

will for inclusion, 2012), especially since these possibilities are related to certain types of movement that devalues the diversity of activity with which some groups can engage (i.e. disability, race and gender, see, e.g. Burrows 2009; Azzarito and Solomon 2005; Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas and Fisette 2016; Fitzpatrick 2011). In addition, the emergence of Random Control Trials (RCTs) as measurements of health-related outcomes in sport and PE, has massively decreased the opportunities for inclusive sport and PE practices (Dagkas 2014) and has led to the medicalisation of PE and sport (Pluim and Gard 2016; Burrows 2009). According to Dillon, Fitzpatrick and McGlashan (2016) approaches to teaching that are focusing solely on health-based outcomes are exclusionary and damaging to students' perceptions of their bodies (Burrows and McCormack 2012) with evidence of disengagement and lack of interest for PE and sport.

Despite Bailey's (2005) call for more empirical work to support the hypothesis that sport generates social networks and feelings of belonging, there is still little evidence to support this; yet the rhetoric is still alive. I have structured this paper into two sections. In the next section I will endeavor to contest the notion of sport as a panacea for society's issues and the idea that it promotes social inclusion and integration mainly referring to Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and young people. I will concentrate mainly on i) the notions of race and racism in sport and PE and ii) the language of sport and PE and its exclusivity (mainly the way in which it promotes exclusionary practices, elitism and maintains whiteness). Even though as I mentioned above there has been globally a wealth of anecdotal evidence of the panacea of sport for

social inclusion there is still a need to discuss the role of sport and physical activity in promoting social inclusion for specific groups in society like those from disadvantaged backgrounds and black and ethnic minority young people. I am examining and reviewing these issues through the lens of Intersectionality, maintaining that the neo liberal pro social sport discourses are based on white middle class doctrines that exclude rather than promote inclusion to certain communities (Dagkas 2016).

“Inclusion” and Ethnic minority groups in PE and Sport.

There has been a noticeable call by scholars in the field of sport and PE for the voices of young people of diverse races, genders and social classes to be heard and legitimated in PE and school sport (Azzarito and Solomon 2005; Dagkas and lisahunter 2015; Hamzeh 2015), that is if we wish to be able to provide an effective learning environment that adopts and respects diversity and individuality (Dagkas and lisahunter 2015). In many cases research evidence suggests that (see for example Hylton 2015) these diverse social identities, especially those of young people with an ethnic minority background and of recent migrants, are ignored in the context of PE, sport and PA or they are channelled to play specific sports based on a dominant racialised discourse of “race logic” (i.e. cricket; athletics, basketball). Within these pedagogical contexts, “pedagogies of exclusion” (Dagkas and Armour 2012) dominate, hierarchies and power relations influence agency, when, in contrast, other, mainly white middle class able bodied young people are legitimised and naturalised (lisahunter 2013; Hamzeh 2015) based on the “whiteness” and “race logic” discourse (Hylton 2015). As such, sports have been used as a ‘punishment stick’ (Hylton 2015) for many black young people

through channelling specific bodies to do specific sports based on biological assumptions. These assumptions have permeated pedagogical practices (i.e. practices of PE teachers and coaches over decades) that are evident even in today's society (Hylton 2015), with the absence of many diverse young people from certain (high social class) sports or indeed their over-representation in other sports (certain 'prole' or working class sports) (see Wilson 2002, 6). In effect, sporting status has been associated not only with masculinity but also with whiteness and in other cases blackness (Bramham 2003), suggesting that Asian and other ethnic minority young people remain marginalised in the popular sports society.

Burdsey (2007) records that young people from ethnic groups have been marginalised from the development of sport in the Western world. In the European context, he maintains that the white (teachers' and coaches') expectations of Asian boys' masculinity were that they exhibited weak masculinity, leading to a perception that young Asian people are uninterested in sport or that sporting bodies are not valued in Asian communities (Benn, Dagkas and Jawad 2011). Furthermore, in the popular mainstream sports here in the UK, there has been physical and discursive marginalisation, most notably in football, that Asian boys, having 'frail bodies', meant they could not keep up physically with the demands of the sport nor did they have good physical frames; therefore, most were turned away during their amateur careers (Burdsey 2007).

Eurocentric curricula, based on "Western white" values and approaches to teaching PE, sport and health pedagogy, have created tensions between

pedagogues, parents, schools and communities. Quarmby and Dagkas (2013) stress the need for PE teachers and practitioners to engage more with young people and their families, and to understand their values, to avoid acts of separatism and “othering”. The cultural and religious capital evident in body modesty such as the wearing of the hijab provides an interesting example of the necessity for caution in a world dominated by visual images and “visual fascism” (Dagkas 2014). According to Dagkas, Benn and Jawad (2011) Cultural capital could be attached to Muslim women who wear the hijab in strongly religious communities (to publically affirm their identities as “good Muslims”) where religious adherence might hold capital in the given field of family or social grouping they occupy. In Benn’s (2003) work, lived realities and discourses captured diversity of positionalities among young Muslim girls, who happily participate in PE and school sport contexts, among those requesting modest clothing for participation, such as the wearing of hijab and finally among those requiring gender-segregated PE classes for freedom of participation.

In this sense, social identities are neither still nor fixed but active and are influenced by the power of language exchanges, which in turn informs agency and praxis (Benn, Dagkas and Jawad 2011). In their Intersectionality study, Dagkas and Isahunter (2015) suggest that the influence of the family field intersected with that of other fields (such as school sport, PE), showing that experiencing conflicting fields (i.e. family; school; school sport and also PE settings) triggered the adaptation of habitus of physical capital. Therefore, they concluded that religion had minimum influence and impact on

participants' embodiment of physical culture and health pedagogy especially for those young people with high economic capital.

Conclusions

The notion of social inclusion through sport is still under-researched and anecdotal in particular when it comes to issues of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and culture. It is evident that things haven't shifted that much since Bailey's paper in 2005 especially on the aforementioned issues, albeit we have some qualitative data and studies (see Benn, Dagkas and Jawad 2011) that could support the narrative of the benefits of sport for the inclusion agenda but also for education enhancement and health (Bailey et al. 2013; Bailey 2016). Still these are isolated; more evidence-based research is needed. I believe this is mainly due to lack of clear funding streams that support such work (especially in the UK). Having said that, there are cases of work on sport for social inclusion being supported by the European Commission under its ERASMUS+ funding scheme and their scheme of Social Inclusion through sport (ERAMUS+ 2017; <https://erasmusplus.org.uk/sport-funding> accessed September 2017), yet this is mainly targeting sport rather than school sport or specifically PE. Another reason for the lack of robust evidence might be because it is difficult to actually provide a causal effect, especially difficult in the field of PE and sport. Richard Bailey in his paper in 2005 (82) makes a good point about causation and correlation and the lack of it in our field to provide clear evidence of the inherent benefit of sport in young people's lives. On the other hand, perhaps the best we can do is to carry out small cohort studies and narratives (mainly based on qualitative research designs) of what works best and for which

groups. But the question we need to pose here is would these small-scale studies be enough to convince policy makers to understand the complexity of PE in the current medicalised narrative? (Burrows and McCormack 2012). Keeping in mind there is no one way of creating a clear narrative that sport is good for everyone or that PE can be inclusive for everyone, what schools offer still matters. The types of activities on offer are also crucial as not all schools can provide the same curriculum, especially when schools are placed in areas of high deprivation (Dagkas and Stathi 2007).

Language also plays an important role in what “practices” can be inclusive or exclusive, for example what counts as inclusion; what type or types of language do we use within PE settings and school sport to promote inclusion and how exclusive can we be based on the language that we use during our interactions with young people. There is evidence to suggest that the language surrounding sport and the language that many sport pedagogues use (e.g. PE teachers, coaches, especially when outsourcing is used) reinforces the injustice agenda with the creation of racialised and gendered bodies, as mentioned earlier in this paper.

“Inclusive PE and School Sport futures?”

I have demonstrated in this short piece - as Bailey did in 2005 - that inclusive practices through sport and PE exist in specific environments and for certain young people and groups. Critical scholars in the field (see e.g. Fitzpatrick 2011; Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas and Fisette 2016, Flintoff, Fitzgerald and Scraton 2008) have demonstrated that it is essential to engage with the diverse body in the sport and PE terrain, most specifically with ethnic minority,

black and migrant young people and their families, in sport, PE, PA and health pedagogy programmes and through interventions, which are well-designed, well-planned and more importantly culturally relevant, if we are to promote the inclusive agenda for those who want to be included. It is clear that this design and planning must take into account the language discourse around sport and PA within ethnic minority groups, as this has been identified by children and families themselves as being critical to increasing PA and sport participation, hence reducing sedentariness among these groups (Curry, Dagkas and Wilson 2016). This is highly relevant in current large inner-city communities where such groups co-exist and occupy pedagogical and leisure-like spaces, and where trans-languaging (Dagkas and Curry, forthcoming) around sport, PA and health shapes agency and practice. As researchers, teachers, health professionals and policy makers, we need to be mindful that while opportunities for sport, PE and PA may appear to be accessible, some bodies may not be engaged in or participate because of structural barriers such as language, type of activities and also mode of delivery of these activities. More supportive and innovative practices may be needed to engage ethnic minority young people in PE, school sport and PA and to reduce sedentary behaviours. For researchers, embracing “Intersectionality” as a research paradigm, there needs to be a requirement to broaden frames of reference and explain multiple positionalities in relation to sport, PA and health pedagogies in schools and beyond to uncover multiple oppressive practices through language exchanges. Education and training for teachers, coaches, sport administrators and organisers must incorporate greater awareness of various social identities and greater awareness of the needs of non-normative

bodies (Dagkas, 2016). Efforts are required to raise the status of careers in the field, such as in teaching, coaching and in leadership development for BME people, particularly for women. Engagement in sport and higher education depends on and, at the same time, builds physical, social and cultural capital (Dagkas 2016).

Finally, I suggest that one key to more inclusive youth sport cultures is to acknowledge the ways in which issues of race, religion, gender, class, sexuality and disability inequalities reinforce one another in sport higher education and training arenas.

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