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Conflict and Consensus within the 'Paralympic field':  
A sociological investigation of an elite disability sport competition

by

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A Doctoral Thesis

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## **Abstract**

This research provides a sociological investigation of an elite disability sport competition known as the Paralympic Games. A quadrennial multi-sport competition for individuals with specific impairments, the Paralympic Games, is explored in this thesis through the method of semi-structured interviews. Individuals interviewed included current and former Paralympians, active and retired disability sport administrators as well as social researchers of disability and disability sport. A number of themes surface in this research which identifies and begins to explore the relationships between the core constituents which influence the Paralympic Games. Assertions about which bodies have a legitimate claim to be involved in Paralympic sport, alongside how impaired bodies are used to create an elite disability sport spectacle, such as the Paralympic Games, remain contested by members and organisations that influence, through consensus and conflict, the development of the Paralympic Movement. The Paralympic Games, of course, has not developed in isolation, but in the context of wider developments across sport. In relation to this the positive and negative influences of the International Olympic Committee upon the Paralympic Games are considered. At the core of the thesis, critical analysis has been generated through the use of the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. In particular Bourdieu's related concepts of habitus, capital and field, in conjunction with previous research into the Paralympic Movement and the extant literature in the field of disability studies, are used to illuminate the existence of a Paralympic field. The possible manifestation of a Paralympic field is explored through the empirical data collected. As a result this thesis highlights the nexus between the sociology of sport and disability studies. Through the fusion of these fields, and by grounding them in a robust theoretical framework, it is hoped that this research will add positively to the literature in this emerging specialism of the sociology of disability sport.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ABC – Australian Broadcast Corporation

AHSNC – Athletes with High Support Needs Committee

BPA – British Paralympic Association

CP – Cerebral palsy

CPC – Canadian Paralympic Committee

CP-ISRA – Cerebral Palsy International Sports & Recreation Association

IBSA – International Blind Sports Federation

ICC – International Coordinating Committee of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled

ID – Intellectually disabled

IF – International Federation – Independent sport federations recognized by the IPC as the sole worldwide representative of a sport for athletes with a disability that has been granted the status of a Paralympic sport

INAS-FID - International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability

IOC – International Olympic Committee

IOSD – International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled

IPC – International Paralympic Committee

ISMG – International Stoke Mandeville Games

ISMWSF – International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation

ISOD – International Sports Organisation for the Disabled

IWAS – International Wheelchair & Amputee Sports Federation (created when ISMWSF and ISOD amalgamated in 2004)

IWBF – International Wheelchair Basketball Federation

NDSO – National Disability Sport Organisation

NPC – National Paralympic Committee

RO – Regional organizations that represent geographic regions within IPC

SMG – Stoke Mandeville Games

SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## **Introduction**

### **Research purpose**

This research project is a sociological investigation of the current manifestation of the Paralympic Games. Literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement and Bourdieu's sociological concepts of habitus, capital and field provide the foundation for this research. The concept of the Paralympic field is borne out of the application of sociological theory to Paralympic knowledge. Possible existence of a Paralympic field is tested and explored through semi-structured interviews with individuals who have experience of Paralympic sport. This sociological investigation explores the perceived purpose(s) of the Paralympic Games, the suitability of differently impaired bodies for elite sport, the impact of the Olympic Movement and finally some potential future developments for the Paralympic Movement.

### **Background**

The Paralympic Movement originated from rehabilitative treatment, provided at Stoke Mandeville hospital in Aylesbury, England from the mid-1940s (Brittain, 2010; Goodman, 1986). At Stoke Mandeville, Dr (later Sir) Ludwig Guttmann used sport as part of the rehabilitative programme administered to servicemen returning from World War II with spinal cord injuries (Guttmann, 1976; Scruton, 1998). Today, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is the governing body for the Paralympic Movement, whose roles include organizing the Paralympic Games. The Paralympic Games are a quadrennial global sports competition for athletes with specific impairments who compete in a selection of disability sport events. According to the IPC website: "the Paralympics are elite sport events for athletes with a disability. They emphasize, however, the participants' athletic achievements rather than their disability."(IPC, 2010a).

The Paralympic Games is a nexus at which the social constructs of elite sport and disability intersect. Both elite sport and disability can be envisaged as social constructs because these social phenomena are created

and exist within culturally specific social interactions and communities. The Paralympic Movement provides a lucrative resource for sociological investigation into the social perceptions of elite disability sport and purportedly elite athletes with a disability. Sporting performances of impaired bodies competing in Paralympic sport provide a focal point for critical analysis of the social constructs of elite sport and disability.

To perceive disability as a social construct, rather than a medical abnormality, has been, and remains, a contentious issue (Shakespeare, 2006). While disability has been articulated as a pathological, medical abnormality of the human body (Turner, 1987) others have sought to emphasise the role played by society in ascribing different meanings to bodies (Shilling, 2003). In particular the social model of disability has strived to distinguish between physical impairment and disability as imposed by society (Oliver, 1990). This project utilises the Paralympic Games as a specialised context in which to explore the social perceptions of disability as articulated within this elite disability sport competition.

Disability as a social construct, as understood through the context of the Paralympic Games, is a significant topic for sociological investigation. Recently, Brittain (2010) asserted: "Paralympic and disability sport is a seriously under-researched area with a dearth of academic material"(p.1). There is a need to build on existing sociological research into Paralympic sport (Brittain, 2010; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Gilbert and Schantz, 2008; Howe, 2008a; Thomas and Smith, 2009). This project seeks to make a significant contribution to knowledge of Paralympic sport within the sociology of sport.

This research has attempted to contribute to existing literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement (Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2010; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Guttmann, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998; Thomas and Smith, 2009). This study also contributes to literature on the Olympic Movement (Guttmann, 2002; Lenskyj, 2000) as the Olympic and Paralympic Games have, to some extent, become increasingly linked through IOC-IPC agreements (Mason, 2002).

Through exploring the social perceptions of supposedly elite sporting performances, created by differently impaired bodies, this research contributes to literature investigating the sociology of the body (DePauw, 1997; Hughes and Patterson, 1997; Patterson and Hughes, 1999; Shilling, 2003). This thesis will attempt to make a contribution to the social understandings of disabled bodies.

By using Bourdieu's sociological theory, this project aims to re-emphasise the suitability of using habitus, capital and field, concepts which have hitherto had limited use when researching disability sport (Howe, 2008a; Petri-Uy, 2008). The applicability of using Bourdieu's sociological theory to research the social perceptions of impaired bodies within the Paralympic Movement is arguably apparent as Shilling (2003) argues: "Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction has at its very centre a concern with the body as a bearer of symbolic value"(p.111). Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field provide the researcher with a way to circumnavigate the false and counter-productive dichotomies of normal-abnormal, and able-disabled which have been frequently employed within social research on disability (Linton, 2006; Oliver, 1990). By operating both within the sociology of sport and making a contribution to the multidisciplinary field of disability studies, this thesis strives to contribute to understanding the potential for these two disciplines to work more closely together and appreciate each other's relevance to understanding the social perceptions that surround the Paralympic Movement.

### Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to better understand and critically analyse the Paralympic Movement. The Paralympic Movement includes the Paralympic Games, which are a quadrennial multi-sport competition for athletes with specific impairments, that is becoming ever-more closely aligned with the able-bodied mainstream Olympic Games. Bourdieu's sociological theory provides a useful framework with which to de-construct and critically examine the Paralympic Movement.

This research has several objectives. This thesis attempts to identify, and explore the relationships between, some core constituents involved in shaping the Paralympic Movement, as encompassed within the Paralympic field. The perceived purposes of the Paralympic Games are explored in this thesis. The suitability of bodies with different impairments to be vehicles for an elite sports competition is considered. Finally, the potential future developments for the Paralympic Movement are discussed. The structure of this thesis will now be outlined.

### Thesis structure

Following this introduction the thesis begins with a review of relevant literature. Firstly, the development of the Paralympic Movement as documented by others is provided in chapter 2. In chapter 3 relevant information relating to disability as a social issue is outlined. Chapter 4 explains the theoretical foundation for this thesis. Bourdieu's sociological concepts of habitus, capital and field are outlined and then applied to generate the current Paralympic field. The method used to examine the Paralympic field is then discussed (Chapter 5). This methodology includes discussion of my philosophical assumptions about knowledge, an outline of the actual research design employed and reflections upon the research process. The dataset used for this research is then noted (chapter 6) before the research findings of this project are then discussed (chapters 7 – 10). Following this some concluding remarks about this research are made (chapter 11). A review of literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement will now be undertaken.

## **Review of Literature:** **Development of the Paralympic Movement**

This chapter outlines relevant literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement. Firstly, the origins of the Paralympic Movement and its transition through three developmental stages are discussed. Subsequently, the influential changes in Paralympic classification are outlined. The development of the IPC, including the Athlete with High Support Needs Committee (AHSNC), and influence of the Olympic Movement upon the Paralympic Movement's development are then appreciated. Finally the potential conflict between disability and sport, embodied by elite athletes with a disability, will be explored.

The historical development of the Paralympic Movement has been widely documented (Anderson, 2003; Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2008, 2010; Goodman 1986; Guttmann, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Legg et al., 2004; Scruton, 1998) It is necessary to appreciate the interaction of history and biography to better inform our understanding of the causes, and contributing factors, which have shaped the current structure of the Paralympic Movement (Mills, 1959).

### **Early developments in the Paralympic Movement**

The origin of the Paralympic Movement has been widely attributed to Dr (later Sir) Ludwig Guttmann's use of sport in the rehabilitation of patients with spinal cord injuries treated at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury, England in the early 1940s (Anderson, 2003; Bailey, 2008; Goodman 1986; Guttmann, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998). However, it is important to remain aware that Guttmann's contribution to disability sport was only possible because of the opportunities and constraints that were present for him and broader society during his lifetime. As Abrams (1982) suggests: "the wall of self around the great individual collapses in the face of historical sociology just as does that around anyone else once we force ourselves to see social reality as process rather than order, structuring rather than structure, becoming not being"(p.267). For Guttmann, it is important to be mindful of his previous experiences with spinal cord injured patients and the

impact of World War II which caused him to flee Germany and take up the opportunity to work at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. All of these factors, and more, arguably contributed to the genesis of the Paralympic Movement (Anderson, 2003; Goodman, 1986; Scruton, 1998).

The first Stoke Mandeville Games (SMG), a pre-cursor of the Paralympic Games, were organised by Guttman in 1948. Guttman (1976) reports that: "It was on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1948 that the Stoke Mandeville Games for the Paralysed were founded as an annual sports festival, with only 16 British ex-members of the Armed Forces (14 men and 2 women) as competitors. This competition took place on the same day that the Olympic Games were opened in London."(p.24). In 1948 SMG competitors competed in archery with netball and darts<sup>1</sup> added to the SMG in 1949 (Scruton, 1998:66). Overtime SMG continued to expand both in terms of sports and competitors. Guttman (1976) states: "the [1952 Stoke Mandeville] Games became international by the participation of a team of Dutch paralysed ex-servicemen"(p.24). The International Stoke Mandeville Games (ISMG) continued to grow, eventually assuming the title of the Paralympic Games approximately<sup>2</sup> from 1960 onwards.

Initially, dovetailing with the work of Ludwig Guttman, the early stages of the Paralympic Movement focussed on providing sporting events for those with spinal cord injuries (Guttman, 1976; Scruton, 1998). It has been argued that this focus hindered development of sport for other disability groups. According to an interview with Bernard Atha, a former President of INAS-FID and the English Federation of Disability Sport:

although Guttman was a most remarkable pioneer, he was a single-minded autocrat and maverick, whose interest was limited to those with spinal cord injury and *he would not entertain the involvement of other disabilities* which I [Atha] as Vice-Chairman of the Sports Council, wished him to do (cited in Thomas, 2003: 108; italics my emphasis).

Hence, Atha is articulating an apparent focus on providing sports opportunities for those with spinal cord injuries, to the detriment of other impaired bodies.



Other disability groups, specifically amputee and blind athletes, were eventually added to the Paralympic Games in 1976 (DePauw and Gavron, 2005) with Scruton (1998) in contradiction to Atha's earlier comments stating: "Sir Ludwig was determined that this time other disability groups should be included in the [1976 Paralympic] Games" (p.321). Here Scruton's close and significant involvement with Guttmann can be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, the in-depth knowledge and experience of Guttmann's work possessed by Scruton could make her opinion appear more credible and accurate. Alternatively her objectivity may be questioned because of her close-working relationship with Guttmann, causing her to portray her friend in a positive, more socially acceptable manner.

Arguably, within the Paralympic Movement there still existed a clear demarcation between different disability groups following Guttmann's death on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1980 (Whitteridge, 2004). Scruton (1998) remarked, in relation to a parade held at the 1980 Paralympic Games to honour the recently deceased Guttmann, that: "only wheelchair athletes were to take part in the parade the walking athletes being seated in the stands"(p.328). This wheel-past by wheelchair athletes may have been a gesture to highlight the work of Guttmann for this cohort of disabled bodies. However, this procession also helps act as a microcosm for illustrating the potential for the Paralympic Games to become a vehicle for *certain* disabled bodies, while others are marginalised to the sidelines. Steadward and Foster (2003) report that the division between sporting provision for those with spinal cord injuries and other impairments, such as amputations and blindness, led to the creation of International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSDs), including the International Sport Organization for the Disabled (ISOD). Steward and Foster (2003) state:

Guttmann...originally felt that the Games he spearheaded should be restricted to participation by athletes with a spinal cord injury. Thus, when a need was echoed for the inclusion of athletes with other disabilities (such as amputee, blind, and *les autres*) he instituted ISOD [International Sport Organization for the Disabled] with the intention of creating *separate* games

and/or events within which athletes with a disability, other than that of spinal paralysis, could participate.(p.493).

This assertion has a profound impact upon the way in which Guttman and the Paralympic Movement as a whole can be perceived. This action in itself highlights the potential conflict and competition that exists between different disability groups within the Paralympic Movement. Furthermore, the creation of ISOD was arguably counter-productive as: “this action prompted other groups to act in an analogous manner, whereby the eventual existence of the six separate [now 5 with ISOD and ISMWGF merging in 2004], international sporting federations have evolved” (Steadward and Foster, 2003:493). There was, and arguably still exists, a need for each disability group to protect their own interests, i.e. inclusion of *their* athletes in the Paralympic Games.

The forerunner for the IPC, called the International Coordinating Committee of World Sports Organisations for the Disabled (ICC), was established in 1982 with the aim of uniting the different IOSDs under a single umbrella organisation (Bailey, 2008; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Scruton, 1998). However, even prior to the establishment of the ICC and subsequently the IPC, there has been concern and conflict between IOSDs about a loss of control of disability sport for *their* athletes (Bailey, 2008). I would argue the struggle between athletes with different impairments to justify their inclusion in the Paralympic Games remains a key issue for the Paralympic Movement today. The potential change in ideology during the development of the Paralympic Movement will now be outlined.

#### Ideological shifts in the Paralympic Movement overtime

Comparisons between the types of sports and impairment groups included in the Paralympic Games from its origin and subsequent development reveal both continuities and discontinuities (Bailey 2008; Brittain, 2010; Cashman, 2008a; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Guttman, 1976; Scruton, 1998). For example, the most obvious continuity of the Paralympic Games is its inclusion of impaired bodies. However, there have been clear changes in the types of disabled bodies that competed at the 1960

Paralympic Games compared to those that will compete at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The many changes experienced through the development of the Paralympic Movement may partly be symptomatic of a change in the purpose of the Paralympic Games. In relation to the emergence of the current format of Paralympic sport, Howe (2008a) asserts: “there appear to have been three stages in the development of sporting provision for the disabled”(p.15). These three stages will now be briefly outlined.

The embryonic stage of the Paralympic Games, according to Howe (2008a): “was designed to aid in the *rehabilitation* of individuals who were seriously injured during the Second World War”(p.15; italics my emphasis). This initial importance of sport as rehabilitation, rather than sport for sport’s sake, for disabled people has been asserted by others (see Anderson, 2003; Scruton, 1998).

An apparent transition in Paralympic sport was perceived to have occurred in the 1960s-70s by Howe (2008a) who asserted the second stage in the development of the Paralympic Movement: “was about participation, and as a result a number of International Organisations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSD) were formed to enable athletes from around the world to compete in sport alongside their physical equals” (Howe, 2008a:15-16). During this time there was a need for Paralympians to take part in several sports and/or events in order to make disability sport competitions feasible (Sainsbury, 2004).

The third development stage set out by Howe (2008a) involves Paralympic sport being branded as “High performance<sup>3</sup> [that] suggests that a competitor is very close to what has been pre-determined by past achievements in a sporting practice as being at the physical limits of the event”(p.57). According to Legg (2003); “The CPC [Canadian Paralympic Committee] believes...that the Paralympic Movement should be seen as having emerged from the rehabilitation and therapeutic recreation roots to a point where *it is now seen as the highest testing ground of athletic excellence for athletes with a disability*”(p.126; italics my emphasis). Today, perhaps in a

desire to mimic able-bodied elite sport, there is an alleged desire for athletes to specialise and compete in a single event<sup>4</sup> (Sainsbury, 2004). The suggestion that an athlete might compete in multiple events is even articulated as a burden as athletes supposedly do not want to “feel compelled to participate in 4 or 5 sports at international level” (Sainsbury, 2004:8). Thus the purpose of the Paralympic Movement can be viewed to have changed significantly overtime. I would suggest the demands upon Paralympians have inevitably changed as the purpose and structure of the Paralympic Games has transformed overtime.

A change in purpose, from rehabilitation, to participation and now high-performance (Howe, 2008a; Legg, 2003; McCann, 1996), could arguably lead to multiple changes, including a shift in the types of disabled bodies involved in the Paralympic Movement. This change in athlete personnel at Paralympic competitions has manifest itself, and been facilitated by, in part, the changes in the classification systems used at the Paralympic Games. The power and potential manipulation of Paralympic classification systems, when responding to the changing purposes of the Paralympic Games, will now be explored.

### Paralympic Classification

Overtime, sporting events included in the Paralympic Games have altered (Bailey 2008; Cashman, 2008a; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Scruton, 1998). These changes have been significantly influenced by issues surrounding the process of classification. Athletic performance at the Paralympic Games, as at many disability sport events, is governed by classification<sup>5</sup> systems. Classification, in disability sport, is a process purportedly intended to act as a means of providing fair and equitable competition for athletes with impairments (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999; Howe and Jones, 2006; Jones and Howe, 2005; Richter et. al. 1992; Sherrill, 1999). The types of classification systems utilised within disability sport, and at the Paralympic Games in particular, have altered overtime (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). While classification is viewed as an essential tool to facilitate sporting competition between impaired athletes, it is far from simple and can be controversial (Sherrill, 1999; Tweedy, 2002). The apparent lack of a robust

classification system for individuals with an intellectual impairment, exposed by able-bodied individuals playing intellectually disabled basketball at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, led to the exclusion of INAS-FID athletes (Bailey, 2008). This classification-based exile will end when, with a newly developed classification system, some athletes with an intellectual impairment will compete at the London 2012 Paralympic Games (IPC, 2009a).

There has been debate between the use of disability specific functional classification systems and a recent move towards the implementation of an integrated functional classification system (DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Howe, 2008a). From the emergence of Paralympic sport (in the 1940s) up to the start of the 1990s, medical classification based upon type and extent of impairment was the dominant classification system used in disability sport competitions (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). The consequences of using this system for the Paralympic Games were that there were a large number of events and finals for each classification group (termed 'classes') which were difficult to include into the same sports competition. There were also problems with the cancellation of events due to there being a very limited number of athletes in particular classes (DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Howe, 2008a; Sherrill, 1989).

To counteract these operational issues, and introducing the potential for cross-disability competition, a classification system based on an athlete's functional profile rather than their specific disability was promoted (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). Swimming competitions at the Paralympic Games are a clear example of a sporting event that has adopted this integrated functional classification system (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999; Howe and Jones, 2006). Introduction of an integrated functional classification system in 1985 meant that swimmers from a range of impairment groups could compete against each other, in a reduced number of classes (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999). The introduction of this functional classification, that reduces the number of Paralympic classes, has not been universally welcomed.

An apparent drive to reduce the number of classes of athletes competing at the Paralympic Games has been viewed as unfair and discriminatory. Firstly, some argue the functional classification system fails to provide *fair sporting access* and *provision* for *all* impaired athletes (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999; Howe, 2008a; Jones and Howe, 2005; Richter et. al., 1992). There are claims that the integrated functional classification system has been, and remains, insufficiently robust to avoid systematically disadvantaging certain disability groups (Howe, 2008a; Steadward, 1996). Furthermore other issues have been cited regarding the use of a functional classification system as, for example, some athletes have been reclassified as a consequence of athletic training improving their functional profile (Howe and Jones, 2006).

Some perceive the introduction of functional classification in some Paralympic sports to be a response to pressure to reduce the number of athletes attending the Paralympic Games<sup>6</sup> (Bailey, 2008; DePauw and Gavron, 2005). It has been documented that there has been concern regarding the disproportionately high number of medals given out at the Paralympic Games, compared to the Olympic Games. The argument put forward is that the value of each gold medal is diminished by the 'excessive' number of medals given out (Bailey, 2008; Sherrill, 1989). Cashman and Darcy (2008a) describe the high number of Paralympic medals, especially at early Paralympic Games, as “a form of gigantism, which has devalued the worth of medals” (p.4). IPC use the term 'medal inflation' in their account of the 1980 Paralympic Games, stating: “With so many different classes, there were more than 3,000 gold, silver and bronze medals to be won. The problem of medal inflation was only to be stabilized after another two Paralympic Games. Still, the athletes clearly deserved these honours for their top performances”(IPC, 2008b). The contradiction expressed here, that each competitor deserved their medal yet there is a need to cut the number of medals, fails to support the assertion that the higher number of medals awarded at the Paralympics, compared to Olympics, makes Paralympic medal recipients somehow less worthy. The potential differential appreciation

of athletic performances by Paralympians with differing impairments will now be considered.

#### 'Different class': Potential removal of unacceptable Paralympians

Recently, the Paralympic Games has invoked the use of more demanding qualification standards which athletes have to meet in order to compete. If an insufficient number of competitors fail to attain the standard a class may be combined or even a whole event removed (Bailey, 2008; Howe, 2008a). Removal of events may be seen to be a drive to maintain the perception that the Paralympic Games is elitist (Sherrill, 1989). The IPC reported the perceived benefit of removing 156 events from the 1988 Paralympic Games:

[At Seoul 1988] 156 events, mostly involving athletes with a serious disability, could not be held because fewer than three athletes had been fielded. There was much disappointment among the competing nations and international federations, but it was a sign that the Paralympic Games would gain credibility as elite athletic standards were implemented (IPC, 2010b).

Meanwhile Sherrill (1989) reported less favourable athlete reactions to the cancellation of these 156 events (mostly for the severely disabled) at the Seoul 1988 Paralympics as athletes either found their events cut or unfairly combined with a more able class.

Instead of merely cutting athlete numbers to a more manageable level, there has been concern that motivation for integrating classes via a functional classification system potentially represents a drive to remove the less marketable, more severely impaired, athletes from the Paralympic brand of elite disability sport (Howe, 2008a; Howe and Jones, 2006; Richter et al. 1992). A move which, if leading to the systematic removal of the severely impaired, is considered by Richter et al. (1992) to be “a perversion of the concept of elitism” (p.6). The precarious position of severely impaired bodies within an elite sporting competition such as the Paralympic Games is articulated by McCann (1996) who warns: “The more severely impaired, despite excellence of performance in physiological terms, present as a less

exciting performance in absolute terms and are at great risk of elimination from elite level competition”(p.279). It is important to emphasise that excitement is a value-laden and subjective variable which may be attained in a number of ways. However, the question remains, are severely impaired bodies a worthy resource for the IPC to use on its quest to elevate the Paralympic Games to the recognisable status of an elite sporting competition which is attractive to corporate sponsors and sports consumers? This research will seek to explore the possible conflicts between the alleged commercial desires of the IPC and the perceived value of severely impaired Paralympians.

A drive toward mediatised commercialisation of the Paralympic Games could lead to the promotion and dominance of a certain *acceptable* type of disabled body (Bertling and Schierl, 2008). Abberley (1996) comments, in reference to the Paralympic Movement: “the taking up of sponsors of aesthetically pleasing, near 'normal' sports and athletes involves the rejection of the 'more disabled' participants, whose performance is seen as unpleasing and whose achievements are unvalued”(p.71) The perceived importance of aesthetics on disability sport has been documented (Bertling and Schierl, 2008; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Hughes, 1999; Stone, 1995; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). To illustrate the importance of aesthetics in sport it may be argued that the overtly muscular torso of British wheelchair racer David Weir, a multiple-medal winning Paralympian, arguably fits the sporting criteria of a highly muscular physique which is particularly revered for male athletes<sup>7</sup>. Not only can the physical prowess of this *athlete* be clearly seen, it can easily be accentuated by only showing the athlete from the torso up during a post-race interview. The importance of the mediatised communication with athletes through press conferences and post-competition interviews may prioritise the position of disabled bodies that can best fulfil this commercial requirement within the Paralympic Movement (Bertling and Schierl, 2008).

The articulation of some seemingly *imperfect* bodies being described as 'supercrips', is arguably another *acceptable* form of Paralympic embodiment (Berger, 2004; Cashman et al. 2004; Duncan, 1998; Howe,



2008a; Schell, and Duncan, 1999; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008; Thomson and Darcy, 2008; Wendell, 1996). Supercrips are defined by Berger (2004) as “individuals [with an impairment] whose inspirational stories of courage dedication, and hard work prove that it can be done, that one can defy the odds and accomplish the impossible”(p.798). The concern that resonates from this style of disability reporting is that these stories “will foster unrealistic expectations about what people with disabilities can achieve, what they *should* be able to achieve if only they tried hard enough. Society does not need to change. It is the myth of the self-made man”(Berger, 2004:798, *italic emphasis in original*). The process of displaying a disabled athlete's sporting success in the frame of a super-human achievement to overcome a disability has proven to be a popular method of reporting disability sport within the media (Howe, 2008b; Schantz and Gilbert, 2001; Schell and Duncan, 1999; Schell and Rodriguez, 2001). For example, Schell and Rodriguez (2001) point to how a female Paralympian, Hope Lewellen, is framed by the media: “Her [Lewellen's] disability is decontextualized, couched entirely within *heroic overcoming* and is segregated from her full identity”(p.133; italics in original).

Even disability sport scholars have published material that risks perpetuating the 'supercrip'<sup>8</sup> including material specifically aimed at publicising and raising the profile of the Paralympic Games (Joukowsky and Rothstein, 2002; Steadward and Peterson, 1997). The explicit use of marketing material to attempt to generate super-human interpretations of Paralympians could be viewed as an example of how the Paralympic Movement is attempting to become synonymous with the Olympic standard of sporting excellence. However, obscuring impairment through this style of reporting is problematic. This chapter will now focus on several key groups which influence the manifestation of Paralympic sport. Firstly, the IPC and its provision for severely impaired athletes will be discussed. Subsequently, the interactions between the IPC and IOC will be examined.

### *International Paralympic Committee (IPC)*

The IPC, since its creation in 1989, has played a central role within the development of the Paralympic Movement. Howe (2008a) argues IPC has

been at the forefront in transforming the Paralympic Games from a participatory sports event into an elite disability sport spectacle stating: “since the inception of the IPC in 1989, this institution has led to a shift from a participatory model of disability sport to one based on high performance that has been further transformed recently by the IPC's desire to sell their Games and Championships as sporting spectacles”(p.7). Sainsbury (2004) suggests the creation of the IPC in 1989 gave 'further impetus' to the development of an integrated functional classification system, as IPC contained representatives who sought to include athletes from different disability groups into a single elite sports event. It is useful to consider the constituents that make up the IPC, thus assisting in understanding the reasons behind actions taken by the IPC.

The IPC consists of a number of different organizations who are vying for control and influence over which athletes and/ or sports should be included in the Paralympic Games. Within the IPC, among other groups, are international organisations of sport for the disabled (IOSDs), for example Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CP-ISRA), International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS), International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA), International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID) (Brittain, 2010). The move toward a sport specific, rather than disability-specific, organisation of elite disability sport by the IPC has led to National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) entering into the battle for control of the structure of the Paralympic Movement and its associated sports competitions such as the Paralympic Games.

Bailey (2008) has already shed light on conflicts between IOSDs and NPCs as groups compete for control and decisions which are favourable for them. Even before Bailey's (2008) revelations, there has been research suggesting that conflict exists between individuals and groups because of differences in impairment (Deal, 2003) with differential perceptions about which disability groups have the credibility to compete in disability sport (Ashton-Shaeffer et. al. 2001; Mastro et. al. 96) including Paralympic sport

(Brittain, 2004, 2010; Sherrill, 1989;). The IPC is an influential body within the Paralympic Movement containing both competing and consensual parts.

The consensual and conflicting relationships between individuals and groups who interact with the IPC are influential in shaping the historical, current and future developments of the Paralympic Movement. This review of literature will now draw on two key organisations which play a role in the development of the Paralympic Movement. Firstly attention will be given to the Athletes with High Support Needs Committee (AHSNC) which is part of IPC. Secondly the impact of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) on the development of the Paralympic Movement will be considered.

#### *Athletes with High Support Needs Committee (AHSNC)*

When analysing the IPC I feel it is pertinent to reflect upon the work and impact of the lesser known Athletes with High Support Needs Committee (AHSNC). The AHSNC, then operating as the Commission for Athletes with a Severe Disability<sup>9</sup>, was established in 2000 and was renamed the AHSNC in late 2007 (IPC, 2010c). The existence of the AHSNC can be viewed as a pragmatic response to the need to cater for disability sports which have been specially adapted to allow individuals with severe impairments to participate. By having the AHSNC, expertise and knowledge about how to stage these events can be developed and the AHSNC becomes a source of information for disability sport administrators and event organisers to assist the incorporation of severely impaired athletes with high support needs. Paralympians categorized as having high support needs are often either, athletes who are blind or possess visual impairments, therefore requiring guides, and athletes with severe impairments (Brittain, 2010). The ability to create opportunities for and safeguard the position of current athletes with high support needs in the Paralympic Games is beyond the remit of AHSNC. Instead, the development of opportunities for athletes with high support needs in Paralympic sport at all levels and in all structures is stated as one of the broad goals of the IPC's long-term strategy (IPC, 2010d). Yet the inclusion of athletes with high support needs in the Paralympic Games continues to prove challenging (Brittain, 2010). Indeed, the effective transfer

of the knowledge within AHSNC to other Paralympic stakeholders, and their willingness to incorporate athletes with high support needs is perhaps questionable. For example, only 676 out of the athlete population of 3806 who competed at the Athens 2004 Paralympic games were athletes with high support needs (see IPC 2009b:14). Furthermore, the target for 1000 athletes with high support needs to compete at the 2008 Paralympic Games failed to be achieved with only 708 of these athletes competing (IPC, 2009b:14).

I would suggest, based on the evidence available, this under-representation of severely impaired athletes with high support needs is perhaps a combination of several interconnected reasons. These factors could include a lack of power for AHSNC, small athlete populations among severely impaired individuals and/or a broad desire within the IPC to include impaired athletes who will attract corporate and media investment. One of the elements of this research project is to begin to explore how conducive the contemporary Paralympic Games are perceived to be regarding the inclusion of athletes with high support needs.

### *Influence of Olympic Movement*

During the development of the Paralympic Movement there has been a desire for it to work more closely with the Olympic Movement (Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2010; Guttman, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998). However, this desire has not always been reciprocated by the IOC.

From the outset, some members of the Paralympic Movement, including Guttman, had aspirations for the involvement of the IOC within Paralympic sport (see Guttman, 1976; Scruton, 1998). It was intentional that the first SMG coincided with the start of the 1948 London Olympic Games (Guttman, 1976; Scruton, 1998). Guttman frequently labelled the ISMG as the “Olympics for the Paralyzed” (Guttman, 1976). Arguably, Guttman used the award of the Fearnley Cup to the ISMG in 1956, received for outstanding achievement in the service of the Olympic ideals, to position the Paralympic Movement closer to the Olympic Movement:

When referring to the Fearnley Cup in his opening speech at the 1957 [International Stoke Mandeville] Games he [Guttmann] stated that 'I hope this is only the beginning of a closer connection between the Stoke Mandeville Games and the Olympic Games. In the past few years I have always emphasised that the Stoke Mandeville Games have become the equivalent of the Olympic Games'. Guttmann added that he hoped that the next Olympic Games at Rome would have a separate section for paraplegics. (Brittain, 2008:22).

The perceived connection between the Paralympic and Olympic Games was intensified when Guttmann, at the 1960 Paralympic Games in Rome, was described, by Pope John XXIII, as “the 'de Coubertin of the Paralyzed” (cited in Scruton, 1998:xiii). Yet, the relationship between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements has been far from harmonious throughout history.

The actual term 'Paralympics' and conditions regarding its permitted use, have proven to serve as a microcosm for highlighting the contests that exist between disability groups, as well as with other sports organizations such as the IOC. There appears to be a general convention to state that the first Paralympic Games were held in 1960 as this was the first time (disregarding the first Stoke Mandeville Games) when the Olympic and 'Paralympic Games' were staged in the same country (IPC, 2008a). However, since 1960 not all Paralympic Games have been held within the same city, or even country, staging the Olympic Games for several reasons (See Bailey, 2008). Furthermore, according to IPC (2008a) it was not until Seoul 1988 that the term 'Paralympics' was officially used.

The decision to use the term 'Paralympics' was contested by groups within the Paralympic Movement because some perceived it to promote and privilege 'para'-plegics over other disability groups (Brittain, 2008; Legg, 2003). In the lead up to the 1976 *Torontolympiad*, at which visually impaired and amputee athletes could compete, the terminology used to describe this sporting festival was again challenged. According to Legg (2003): “The addition of these athletes [with visual impairments and amputations] forced organizers to change the name of the event from the 'Paralympics' to the 'Olympiad for the Physically Disabled” (p.123). Robert Jackson, instrumental

in the development of Paralympic sport in Canada, when interviewed by Legg (2003), stated: “The term Paralympics was studiously avoided because it had the connotation of paraplegic games and so was objected to by the amputee and blind athletes” (p.123).

The term 'Paralympics' was also a contentious issue for those outside of the Paralympic Movement. The term 'Paralympics' was being used to label a disabled sporting movement that failed to have an acknowledged nor agreed relationship with the Olympic Movement (DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Scruton, 1998). In the infancy of the Paralympic Movement several issues arose, and have remained, relating to the use of the term 'Olympics' in regard to Paralympic sport (Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2008; Guttmann, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998). For example, Brittain (2008) reports that in the early 1980s: “In return for the removal of Olympic terminology from their [ICC] events, he [IOC president Samaranch] added that he was willing to offer the disabled sports movement both IOC patronage and financial assistance”(p.32). Thus paradoxically the IOC appeared willing to become more involved with the IPC, if the Paralympic Movement was seen to be clearly demarcated from the Olympic Movement.

A key development in the relationship between the IPC and IOC occurred at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games at which Paralympic demonstration events were held<sup>10</sup> (Bailey, 2008; Legg et al, 2009). This allowed some Paralympic athletes the opportunity to compete in the same venue as Olympians, but still somewhat marginalised because they never received Olympic medals and are absent from the Olympic records<sup>11</sup>.

The need to still maintain a clear demarcation between the Olympic and Paralympic Games was still evident though post 1984, as Scruton (1998) reports “[In 1990] IOC had requested that the logo created by SPOC [Seoul Paralympic Organising Committee] of the five 'tear drops' not be used, as it was considered to be too close to the IOC five-ring emblem.”(Scruton, 1998:296). More recently, further conditions have been set down by the IOC defining and regulating both the actions of the Paralympic Movement and any possible involvement of the IOC in Paralympic sport (Bailey, 2008; Howe,

2008b; IPC, 2010e). For example, in June 2001 an agreement was signed between the IPC and IOC making any city bidding for the Olympic Games also obliged to bid for and stage the Paralympic Games<sup>12</sup> (IPC 2010e). Thus, the IOC continues to have a profound impact upon the development of the Paralympic Movement today.

Some view the connection of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to prove the credibility of the Paralympic Games as an elite sports event. However, it is important not to lose sight of the possibility, as noted by Hughes (1999), that: “in some quarters the Paralympics may be seen as a necessary evil, an inferior sports event that has to be tolerated because they are part of the Olympic package”(p. 171). Thus even though the IPC may be seen to work more closely with the IOC, this does not guarantee the Paralympic Movement will be viewed as equal to the Olympic Movement. As previously discussed, the relationship between the IPC and IOC has altered overtime (Bailey 2008; Howe, 2008a; Mason, 2002) and will inevitably change in the future. The power of the IOC and its involvement with the IPC makes the IOC-IPC relationship a significant factor in understanding the development of the Paralympic Movement.

Most recently the relationship between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements has been brought into the public domain through Paralympic athletes trying to compete at the Olympic Games. The attempts to compete at the 2008 Paralympic Games by Oscar Pistorius, a double leg amputee, have been widely discussed by both academics and media reporters (Brittain, 2010; Edwards, 2008; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008; Telegraph, 2007; Thomas and Smith, 2009). Oscar Pistorius’s experience has given an insight into the potential barriers facing impaired athletes wanting to compete against their able-bodied counterparts.

Other individuals with impairments have competed at previous Olympic Games, although their inclusion has not always been welcomed (Jespersen and McNamee, 2008). For example, it has been argued that wheelchair archers have an advantage over able-bodied archers due to their possession of a solid base (the wheelchair) from which to deliver the arrow.

This argument was used in opposition to wheelchair archer Neroli Fairhall's inclusion in the 1984 Olympic Games (See Jespersen and McNamee, 2008:93). The most significant barrier facing Pistorius has arguably been concerns that the technology which he uses to compete gives him an unfair advantage over able-bodied athletes (BBC 2008a).

Technology is an important issue for the Paralympic Movement in general. The technology used in Paralympic sport has changed dramatically overtime (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). It could be argued technology, in the form of prostheses and wheelchairs, merely provide impaired individuals the opportunity to compete in sport. What an athlete achieves in a sport is down to their talent and effort. Alternatively as prostheses become lighter and streamlined racing wheelchairs are used within Paralympic sport, so the subsequent improvements in performance blur the distinction between sporting ability and technological advancement. The Pistorius case has reawakened debate as to the perceived legitimacy in using certain technologies in sport and society. There have been concerns voiced, in relation to Pistorius, about the development of human cyborgs as technology becomes integrally integrated into human bodies (Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). This research will be sensitized to the significant role played by technology within the Paralympic Movement both in terms of how technology influences sporting practice and how Paralympic sporting performances are perceived. This chapter will now discuss the complex relationship between disability and sport as articulated within the Paralympic Movement.

### Splitting the Paralympic atom – Disability and sport

The desires for, and social perceptions of, the Paralympic Games are heavily influenced by differential interpretations of how an elite disability sport competition should be organised and what it should seek to achieve.

Since 2003, the IPC state that their vision is: "to enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the World"(IPC, 2010d). Other scholars have sought to clarify the meaning behind the IPC's vision, mission and values. Cashman (2006) asserts that when considering the desired outcomes of the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games: "the primary



objective is to stage a successful Paralympic Games” (p.249). This statement can be considered ambiguous as it fails to rigidly define ‘success’. However, it is important to note that it is arguably delivery of a sports competition that is *the* primary objective for the IPC. This is made clearer as Cashman (2006) outlines: “a secondary and subsidiary aim is to use the [Paralympic] Games to improve the city's sports infrastructure for athletes with disabilities and to improve the city's disability infrastructure in general – in transport, access to buildings and so forth”(p.249). Cashman (2006) goes on to assert:

A third possible aim, which gains coverage in the media and which appeals to politicians and community leaders, is that the [Paralympic] Games may enhance disability awareness in society and improve the lot of the disability community. This is an aspect of the Games that appeals greatly to disability scholars but less so to the organisers of Paralympic sport, who prefer to emphasise the sporting character of the Games. (p.249)

The second and third objectives outlined above can be linked to notions of empowering 'the disabled' community through the removal of social and physical barriers. The second objective<sup>13</sup> can be seen to explicitly tie in with calls from social activists for the removal of environmental barriers that can disable an individual with an impairment (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990). I would argue, as Cashman (2006) insinuates, that these secondary and tertiary objectives may be actively sought, assuming it does not undermine the achievement of the primary objective. Indeed, the fact this secondary objective of social change is, according to Cashman (2006), a 'subsidiary' aim, and not on a par with the delivery of a 'successful' sports event, perhaps begins to highlight the potential distance between disability and sport within the Paralympic Games. In doing so, this perception on behalf of Cashman, if accurate, illustrates the Paralympic Games to be first and foremost a sports competition. The notion of using this sporting event for broader social change may be implicit because of the involvement of impaired bodies, but is arguably subservient to the delivery of the (disability) sporting spectacle that is the Paralympic Games. This approach to Paralympic sport I would argue

contributes to the ideological uncoupling of elite athletes (with a disability). A phenomenon I will now address.

### Contradictory interpretations of elite athletes (with a disability)

The complexity of elite disability sport is articulated by considering the dual role of a Paralympian. Firstly, the desired reception of an impaired athlete's performance, by an *able-bodied audience*, may focus on valuing sporting achievement and performance, *aside* from disability. Deciphering the disabled sporting performance in this way may begin to breakdown the 'otherness' of disability and potentially empower 'the disabled' community both sporting and sedentary.

Secondly, the desired reception of the disabled athlete's performance by a *disabled audience* may mean the viewer identifies with the impairment the athlete has, while also appreciating their performance. This recognition of impairment and sporting performance, it may be hoped, could lead to the disabled athlete becoming a role model for other people with similar impairments (Joukowsky and Rothstein, 2002).

Both of these scenarios could be considered beneficial outcomes for disability sport and the broader disability community. However, these dual receptions of the disabled athlete represent the paradox of the elite athlete with a disability within the Paralympic Movement. The more an impaired athlete's disability is de-emphasised (desired reception of able-bodied audience) the more that those viewers with disabilities become alienated from their own bodies and disability sport in general. The implications of this paradox are yet to be fully discussed and demand attention. Tied up within this paradox of emphasis/ de-emphasis of disability within disability sport is the articulation of impairment within sport. Is it good to talk about impairment within disability sport or not? Is it constructive to discuss the intricacies of classification within media coverage of disability sport events such as the Paralympics?

Some argue that the absence of a critique of classification by the media leaves consumers with little understanding of Paralympic sport (Howe, 2008b). Caroline Davison, of ABC (Australian Broadcast Corporation)

producer of the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, blamed a lack of information about classification and Paralympic sports, to some extent, for seemingly poor Paralympic coverage (see Cashman and Tremblay, 2008:106-107). However, Hinds (2000) suggests members of the media who attempt to report Paralympic sport in an informed and critical way risk automatic censorship as they stray from the more palatable heart-breaking feel-good stories about overcoming disability. Hence, athletes' desires for respect and acknowledgement of their high performances become subordinated beneath tragic-overcoming stories, rather than mainstream sports<sup>14</sup> reporting as "the spotlight dwells on the reason for their [Paralympic athletes] eligibility [to compete]"(Hinds, 2000:80). The apparent focus on disability, rather than sporting achievement, is reaffirmed by Hilvoorde and Landeweerd (2008) who argue: "for many people in disability sport, the athlete is still a 'patient combating their limitations', instead of an elite athlete with specific talents or virtuosity"(p.108). Darcy and Cashman (2008a) using surveys conducted after the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, give a further insight into the reception of Paralympic athletes. The acknowledged dedication of Paralympic athletes was evident to Darcy and Cashman (2008a) who report: "93 per cent of Australians believe that Paralympic athletes are elite athletes who *train* as hard as able-bodied athletes and 87 per cent believe that they should receive the same or more funding than Olympic athletes" (p.219-220; italics my emphasis). It is however important to note that the response concerned 'training', not actual sporting performance. Hence while Paralympians may be perceived as elite in that they devote a considerable amount of time to their sport, this does not necessarily translate into perceived elite sporting performance in competition. Do these discussions of impairment and classification help inform and educate the public about disability and disability sport, or does it contribute to a disempowering emphasis on disability rather than ability? This issue of empowerment remains pertinent to debates within disability studies and disability sport including the Paralympics and will be discussed further (see chapter 3).

To emphasise sport, at the cost of possibly marginalising impaired individuals both inside and outside of the Paralympic context is a concern. Referring to the work of DePauw (1997), is (In)Visibility of DisAbility in Sport the desired outcome for a sporting competition such as the Paralympic Games that only includes, by definition and classification, athletes with a disability. Is it instead more important, but also more complex, to desire a situation in which according to DePauw (1997) a transformation occurs in sport culture whereby “we are able to *'see' sport and athlete with a disability without seeing any contradiction...that is we will see an athlete, an athletic performance, and a 'sporting body'.*”(p.428; italics my emphasis). Hilvoorde and Landeweerd (2008) perceive: “there seems to be a sharp contrast between the athlete as a cultural hero and icon and the disabled person that needs extra attention or care; the one incorporating the peak of normality, human functioning at its best, the other often representing the opposite”(p.98). Thus the view of the disabled body and sporting body are seen as contradictory not capable of being perceived within the same body at the same time. The relationship between the physicality of the 'sporting body' and the socially imperfect 'impaired body' is complex and some may say contradictory. Hughes (1999) asserts: “Perhaps there is some awkwardness and discomfort in watching athletes with some obvious disability perform. They pose the issue of otherness, *reminding* the sporting public that not all elite athletes have ideal physiques and attractive body shapes”(p.171; italics my emphasis). Some may state the ideal physique and body shape *is* the key determinant of an elite athlete (Brittain, 2010). However, there is arguably a need to attempt to re-articulate sporting bodies so that the bodies of elite athletes with a disability can be recognised as sporting bodies.

If there is a thirst by the Paralympic Movement to be viewed as an arena of sporting bodies not imperfect disabled bodies; it is possible that the most noticeable markers of imperfect bodies, i.e. the 'severely impaired' may be culled from the Paralympic Games. This would represent a logical consequence as the ideological separation of disability and sport within the Paralympic Movement becomes a physical separation of bodies that

represent sport, and those that do not. Darcy and Cashman (2008b) state there exists an: “ongoing debate about whether the Paralympics should display the range of disability sport or whether the event should be promoted as a spectacle of elite sport”(p.243). Hence, it is arguably being discussed whether some impairments and/or disability sports are more conducive to the notion of 'elite' sport compared to others. This again points to the removal of those impaired bodies that do not 'fit' the elite (disability) sports event that is the Paralympic Games.

Taking this argument to its logical conclusion leads to the extinction of the Paralympic Games. This is because the Paralympic Games, as an elite sports event devoid of impairment, by definition *is* the Olympic Games. According to Hughes (1999):

Paralympic philosophy was summarised at the opening ceremony of the 1992 Paralympic Games by Jose Maria Arroya: 'I am sure that the social integration of the disabled, which we wish for in all fields, will spread naturally and inevitably<sup>15</sup> to top level sports competitions'. We can read into this a desire for the Paralympics of the future to be totally integrated into the Olympic Games. (p.171)

Is this the desired destination for the Paralympic Movement? These new integrated Games may perhaps be re-named the 'real Olympics' as the philosophy of Olympism is allegedly truly shown by the inclusion of elite athletes with a disability (Landry, 1995). However, it is important to question how this new sports event for all elite athletes (regardless of impairment) will be organised. Classification of impaired athletes will still be necessary, hence how will the gargantuan event be feasible? Which impaired bodies will be allowed to compete, especially assuming the Olympic athlete population will not be reduced? Ultimately, if the Paralympic Games were devoured by the Olympics, this would have immense implications on the ability of (certain) disability groups to compete at the top level. Darcy and Cashman (2008) highlight:

Dr Robert Steadward had challenged such an approach [amalgamating Olympic and Paralympic athletes so the

Paralympics become redundant] in a number of speeches in which he has maintained that the IPC needs to be conscious of the underlying philosophy of the Paralympics and continue to do more for athletes with high support needs and maintain their presence in the Paralympics. (p.233-234)

Thus paradoxically I would argue the Paralympic Movement's current trajectory of development could culminate in the Paralympic Games being abolished as the Paralympic Movement is consumed by the Olympic Movement. Part of the remit of this research project is to consider what possible futures may lay ahead for the Paralympic Movement.

### Summary

This project seeks to build upon the existing body of literature on the Paralympic Movement. Most notably, this research looks to contribute to the limited literature within the sociology of sport on the Paralympic Movement. This chapter has set out some of the relevant literature and issues which have influenced the development of the Paralympic Movement to-date. The origins of the Paralympic Movement and its alleged transition through three developmental stages as described by Howe (2008a) have been documented. Subsequently, the influential changes in Paralympic classification were discussed. The development of the IPC, including the AHSNC, and the influence of the Olympic Movement upon the Paralympic Movement's development were then considered. Finally the potential conflict between disability and sport, embodied by elite athletes with a disability, was explored in detail. The next chapter continues this social exploration of seemingly impaired bodies, by looking in detail at how disability is articulated as a social issue, and what role the Paralympic Movement may have in this dialogue.

## **Review of Literature:** **Paralympic sport and social perceptions of disability**

This project situates itself within literature that documents the development of the Paralympic Movement, however there are also overlaps into literature pertaining to the social perception of disability in broader society. This research seeks to forge clearer connections between Paralympic sport and the broader discipline of disability studies<sup>16</sup>. Firstly, disability as a social issue as conceptualised within disability studies will be discussed. Secondly, the potential for the Paralympic Movement to contribute to the social issues faced by disabled people will be explored.

### **Disability as a contested, social issue**

Using particular terminology in discussions of disability and sport for the disabled<sup>17</sup> can be significant, and thus necessitates disability researchers to be aware of the power encapsulated within certain words and phrases. Bourdieu's (1991) work *Language and Symbolic Power* highlights the importance of language in shaping and conveying the value and meaning(s) behind verbal and written communication. This researcher is aware of the importance bestowed upon disability terminology which can influence how ideas and concepts are received.

### ***(Ab-)Use of disability terminology***

The transience, in terms of meaning and perceived acceptability, of terminology used to articulate disability has been acknowledged (Albrecht et al., 2001). Within the British context, some words previously used to label individuals with a disability are today considered derogatory. A selection of words, now used as insults, originated as technical terminology to demarcate levels of impairment. For example, 'imbecile', 'idiot' and 'moron' were once labels for demarcating different levels of IQ, a method of quantifying intellectual disability (Chupik and Wright, 2006; Morris, 1969; Ryan and Thomas, 1980). Terms such as 'cripple' and 'spastic' are today generally considered insulting labels for individuals with certain physical impairments. The change in perceived acceptability of using the term 'spastic' to describe

people with cerebral palsy was deemed sufficient to justify a charity for people with cerebral palsy, formerly called 'The Spastics Society', to become renamed 'Scope'<sup>18</sup>. However, it has been noted that some individuals with cerebral palsy (CP) may still use the word 'spastic' to describe themselves and others (Shakespeare, 2006). In this instance the word 'spastic' becomes a 'badge', not a label, used by a group of individuals with CP to highlight their group identity (Shakespeare, 2006). This 'badge' provides some individuals with a collective sense of belonging and potential sense of empowerment.

The distinction between terminology deemed acceptable or unacceptable to use within disability studies is far from black and white. There is a more subtle degree of 'disability correctness' (Shakespeare, 2006) that qualifies which terminology is appropriate and which is misguided, or even disablist. The implications of not using appropriate phraseology could render some works of literature, including disability literature, as useless and even discriminatory towards people with disabilities. For example, when Goffman (1963) was writing, 'handicapped' represented an appropriate label to use to describe disability. However, the term 'handicapped' is now considered derogatory within the UK. Without appreciating the historical context and evolution of terminology Goffman's (1963) text could be viewed today as old-fashioned, irrelevant or even disablist. This could lead to Goffman's (1963) ideas being rejected and/or ignored. The current practice of 'person-first terminology' (Swain et al. 2003) represents among some audiences the *only* acceptable method with which to articulate the experiences of 'individuals with a disability'.

The war of words surrounding disability remains an emotive potential barrier prohibiting progress across disability studies. As outlined by Shakespeare (2006):

While terminology is important, it is *not* as important as the underlying values. Quibbling over 'disabled people' versus 'people with disabilities' is a diversion from making common cause to promote the inclusion and rights of disabled people (p.33; italics my emphasis).



The methods, i.e. words, through which ideas are articulated, while important, should not act as an absolute gatekeeper. This risks marginalising useful debates merely due to the use of seemingly inappropriate words to describe the highly contested topic of disability. As such this project will attempt to utilise the terms that the author feels best describes an individual or group in the context in which they are being discussed. For example I may use the term 'disabled people' when discussing the perceived social barriers faced by individuals with an impairment. Within this thesis, I use the terms 'impaired athletes' and 'elite athletes with a disability'. I do so based on my perception as to which term appears most appropriate to me in that given context. I believe it is problematic to only use a single term for example 'disabled people' throughout this document. As such, I would be privileging a particular term over others thereby contributing to disability correctness (Shakespeare, 2006). Furthermore, if this chosen term was perceived as inappropriate by some audiences, this research may suffer the plight of being disregarded as ill-informed for not using what another individual perceives to be the correct terminology. Inevitably, by using different disability terminology I still risk this latter issue occurring. I hope through having this discussion this research will be judged on the meanings behind the words, rather than on the actual words used.

Within disability studies there is debate between two competing models used to understand disability. These are the 'medical model' and the 'social model' of disability, and they will now be discussed in turn.

### *Medical model*

The medical model of disability can be adjudged to emanate from the rise of the medical profession to social dominance in the final decades of the nineteenth century (Wendell, 1996). This ascension to prominence is closely related to the successes of germ theory, new practices in surgical intervention and reliability of new drugs (Turner, 1992:155). This model defines disability as a bio-medical deviation from the normal body (Oliver, 1990). Disability is viewed as an absolute, pathological medical condition demanding diagnosis and treatment. Thus, disability is reduced and

contained as a consequence of certain malfunctions of the biological machine that is the human body (Turner, 1987). Turner (1987) highlights the primacy of the biological over the social as:

the medical model assumes that all human dysfunctions might eventually be traced to such *specific causal mechanisms within* the organism; eventually various forms of mental illness would be explicable directly in terms of biochemical changes (p.9; italics my emphasis).

Subsequently, the medical fraternity has possession over the naming, medical exploration and treatment of abnormal disabled bodies.

Disability studies scholars have been critical of how this model isolates 'the disabled' in wider society (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990). The medical model has been considered to dis-empower disabled people who become the subjects of the medical profession's power and control (Hargreaves, 2000) being viewed as personal tragedies (Oliver, 1990) helplessly dependent upon pity and charity (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). In summary, the medical model leads to disability defining and isolating an impaired individual's identity and lifestyle, separating them from 'normal' society.

### *Social model*

Aiming to empower disabled people, following the medicalisation of the impaired body, the social model of disability emerged. The social model sought to make a distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairment was defined as "a functional limitation caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment" (Barnes, 1994:2). Whereas disability was defined as "the loss or limitation of opportunities...due to physical and social barriers"(Barnes, 1994:2). Notwithstanding the problem of using the word impairment to define impairment (Shakespeare, 2006), the social model was (and still is) considered a highly useful emancipatory force in the lives of many disabled people (Shakespeare, 2006; Tresgakis, 2002). The social model defined disabled people as a marginal group discriminated from entering employment in capitalist societies and hence denied lifestyle opportunities by physical and social barriers (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990). It was the removal of these

physical and social barriers that was the *raison d'être* of the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2006).

The social model functions as an overtly political thesis representing an approach to disability politics<sup>19</sup> that demands the removal of social and physical barriers which discriminate against 'the disabled' (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990; Tregaskis, 2002). The ability to selectively focus and harness public attention on a single group (the disabled) was considered key to forcing and enacting meaningful social change for individuals with a disability. In doing so, social model activists sought to battle on behalf of disabled people, against able-bodied oppressors, to bolster 'the disabled' group coherence (Shakespeare, 2006). By vilifying the able-bodied public en masse, it can be argued the social model was fundamentally flawed; creating divisions that are more likely to entrench ideological divisions, rather than overcome them. The social model also failed to identify and emphasise the permeable boundary that exists between able-bodied and disabled people (Shakespeare, 2006). Some argue there is a commonality of purpose for able and disabled people as bodily limitation is a universal of the human condition (Murphy, 1987) and an inevitable occurrence during a person's lifetime (Zola, 1981). This link or bond between able-bodied and disabled populations (if that clear dichotomy really exists) was cast adrift by the social model through an emphasis upon the differences between the able-bodied and the subordinated disabled population (Oliver, 1990). A discussion of the differences that exist among those making up 'the disabled' population was considered politically dangerous and damaging to the formation of a strong social movement for disabled people (French, 1993). The social model of disability was wary that: "an emphasis on fluid identities undermines political cohesion"(Barnes and Mercer, 2001).

Some argue the social model of disability, while allegedly creating a group with which to yield political power, actually becomes disembodied and loses sight of the individual's needs to whom it purports to represent and serve (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Paterson and Hughes, 1999). As outlined by French (1993): "differing experiences of people with a variety of

impairments must be taken seriously or some people will be alienated from the disability movement” (p.22). Subsequently, the disability movement risks not being inclusive to all disabled people (Shakespeare, 2006). French and Swain (2006) state: “denial of individual experience has itself limited disability studies, and marginalised legitimate concerns and understandings” (p.383). Another criticism levelled at the social model is its apparent neglect in appreciating the role of other structural factors such as gender (Hargreaves, 2000) and race, as well as the impact of personal pain, fatigue and depression upon the lives of disabled people (Borsay, 2005). The shortcomings of a social model that is detached from the lived experience of some impairments is reflected in French (1993) asserting: “some of the most profound problems experienced by people with certain impairments are difficult, if not impossible to solve by social manipulation” (p.17). This interplay of the biological *and* social experiences of disability fundamentally illustrates how society is written into the body (Bourdieu, 1990a). As a result, the utility of the term 'the disabled' will now be considered in more detail.

### *'The Disabled'*

In disability studies, where the use of certain words means so much, it is (perhaps) surprising that so often the poorly defined, ambiguous term 'the disabled' is the key group identified in issues of disability, both within disability sport and other aspects of society.

The term 'the disabled' has been purported as a cohesive group identity with which to achieve political social change, to improve the lives of its members (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990). However, the multiplicity of individuals encompassed by the term 'the disabled' is far more diverse than may be initially apparent (Blaxter, 1976; Sherrill and Williams, 1996). Not all impaired people have the same needs or are disadvantaged in the same ways (Pensgaard and Sorenson, 2002; Shakespeare, 2006). Disability is physically and socially multidimensional (Sherrill, 1997). The experiences of disabilities vary greatly within the group of individuals labelled 'the disabled'. This raises the question as to which disabled bodies can/should be combined into a collective entity (Sherrill and Williams, 1996). There has been

suggestion that the term 'physical minorities' if applied to people with physical disabilities would give people with physical impairments a more cohesive political identity than the more abstract category 'the disabled' (Davis, 1995). Different disability organisations operate independently of each other, hence separate national sporting organisations for individuals with CP (CP-ISRA) and those with intellectual disability (INAS-FID). Thus can the individuals represented by these groups be suitably described under the umbrella term of 'the disabled' (Sherrill, 1997). Some disability groups choose to openly reject membership of a group labelled as 'the disabled'. For example, some Deaf people prefer to consider themselves part of a linguistic minority (Davis, 1995). Determining who belongs to the group 'the disabled' is of paramount importance. How people are represented by and through the use of the term 'the disabled' is key to making sense of social perceptions of disability and disability sport as expressed through the Paralympic Movement.

It is important not to oversimplify and generalise social phenomena to the extent that they become devoid of representative meaning and reality. Throughout the critical analysis of the Paralympic Movement it is necessary to question the notion of a harmonious, homogeneous collection of individuals being part of the group labelled 'the disabled'. By appreciating and accepting the differences and conflicts within and between different disability groups (see Deal, 2003; Mastro et al. 1996) a more sophisticated approach can be taken when critically analysing the Paralympic Movement's contribution to the social perception of disability as demonstrated at the Paralympic Games. The potential for the Paralympic Movement to contribute to social issues faced by disabled people will now be discussed.

### Paralympic sport and social change

#### *'Empower, Inspire, Achieve'...for whom?*

The emphasis on sport, not disability, by the IPC (as discussed in chapter 2) can be viewed as a positive drive to empower athletes with a disability. It may be argued that the IPC is seeking to ensure the Paralympic Games do not become a modern day freak show full of curious specimens for

others to view (See Thomson, 1996). The apparent aim of the IPC is to encourage people to see the ability, not the disability.

The wish, on behalf of the IPC, to see the sport and not the impairment, in the form of an athlete's classification status, may be considered conducive with the social model's desire to focus on disability as being a social barrier that needs changing, rather than the significance of impairment. Yet, it is widely asserted that disability sport needs classification to function fairly (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999; Richter et. al. 1992). Necessity for (medical) classification could be considered damaging to social model activists. IPC's drive to focus on the social phenomena of sport (disregarding impairment) may be considered a harmonious, symptomatic consequence of the social model. An attempted de-emphasis of an athlete's classification (based on impairment) and emphasis of their sporting performance within Paralympic sport; can be seen to mimic the impairment (medical) and disability (social) divide within the social model.

Alternatively, some social model activists may argue there is a need to identify 'disability', not de-emphasise it, if the Paralympic Games is to enact social change for individuals with impairments. Illustrating the desire to de-emphasise disability at the Paralympic Games, Cashman and Thomson (2008) state: "in the early planning for the Paralympics, the then Minister for Ageing and Disability, Ron Dyer, was asked by SPOC [Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee] to give a speech on the upcoming Paralympic Games, but he was asked not to mention the word disability."(p.139). Thus, if the term disability cannot be voiced, how can IPC claim social change for disabled people is a legitimate aim of the Paralympic Movement. This event may be disregarded as an isolated incident, but is revealing of the interplay between disability and sport within the Paralympic Movement.

Empowerment, when conceived as an individual possessing the freedom to live their life as they want, is a highly desirable social quality. Inevitably, minority groups (on the basis of gender, race and disability) have been the most obvious exponents of political action to acquire self-empowerment (Campbell and Oliver, 1996). To help articulate the ideology

and aims of the IPC, the Paralympic motto “Spirit in Motion” is invariably combined with the three word phrase “Empower, Inspire, Achieve”(IPC, 2007:10). By utilising the word ‘empower’, the Paralympic Movement can be seen to emanate from and still exist as part of a wider social movement for disability rights. However, the degree to which actual empowerment is achieved for Paralympians and non-Paralympians are highly debatable.

Arguably the Paralympic Movement can be perceived to stall in the drive to empower 'the disabled' as disability is marginalised in pursuit of being accepted as a legitimate model of elite sporting practice, not a stigmatised minority disability sport movement. According to Cashman and Thomson (2008):

To enhance outcomes of sponsorship, SPOC [Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee] aggressively marketed the Paralympics as an elite sporting event and appeared to distance itself from the foundational disability aspects of the Paralympics (p.139).

The Paralympic Games arguably do bring into vivid focus the potential for creating accessible environments and promoting disability awareness. However there is a marked difference between what impaired people can expect when 'the world is watching' i.e. when the Paralympic Games are being held, compared to the mundane every day existence (Cashman et al., 2004). Positively Darcy and Cashman (2008b) highlight:

For a period of ten days [during the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games] there was an overwhelming focus on athletes with a disability...there was much media discourse on disability and the public had a rare opportunity to listen to the voices of Paralympians and view photographs of Paralympic athletes that challenged mainstream media stereotypes of welfarism.(p.239-240).

However, the tension between elite sport and grassroots sporting participation was highlighted at the 2000 Paralympic Games in that:

At the time that Sydney was celebrating the performances of elite athletes with disabilities, funding to disability programs had

undergone significant cutbacks. The cutbacks and other discriminatory policy issues led to a number of street protests, in which the disability advocacy community were refused access to the politicians making these decisions (Darcy and Cashman, 2008b:240).

Such occurrences exasperate a potential fracture between elite and recreational or sedentary populations also undermining the possibility for empowerment, via the Paralympic Games, for the majority.

### *Paralympians NOT disabled*

As previously discussed, there appear to have been explicit attempts by the IPC and other Paralympic stakeholders to proliferate super-human interpretations of Paralympians. These could be viewed as an example of how the Paralympic Movement is attempting to become synonymous with the Olympic standard of sporting excellence. However, just as Olympic role models may become considered detached from the general public, thus undermining their potential to act as role models; so too Paralympians risk being alienated from the sedentary population of impaired bodies.

The potential for Paralympians to become ideologically uncoupled from individuals with impairments who are not elite athletes raises serious issues. Cashman and Thomson (2008) comment:

while the [2000 Sydney Paralympic] Games helped changed (sic) attitudes towards the Paralympics and Paralympians, such attitudes did not spill over to the disability community more generally. It seems clear that such people had reservations about the Paralympics and *did not regard them as relevant to their situation* (p.140; italics my emphasis).

Elsewhere, there is some evidence that “some [Paralympic] athletes are beginning to question the need to self-identify as disabled” (Huang and Brittain, 2006:371). This disassociation from 'the disabled' is argued to stem from the status given by identifying as an elite athlete. Huang and Brittain (2006) report: “[elite] disability sport provides a possible way out of the traps of negative identification...the recognition this [elite sport] affords them [the athletes] allow them to pin their dominant identity on that of an elite disabled



athlete”(p.372). The distancing of Paralympians from other impaired bodies is apparent when Berger (2004) cites wheelchair basketball player Melvin Juette's assertion that:

The two groups [elite disabled athletes and the non-sporting disabled] do not necessarily see themselves as sharing a commonality of interests. In fact, many of the [disabled] non-athletes do not even view the [elite disabled] athletes as disabled (p.806).

Sherrill's (1989) research at the Seoul 1988 Paralympics reinforces this disparity between Paralympians and other disabled bodies. Sherrill's (1989) fieldwork at the 1988 Paralympic Games caused her to report: “most athletes wanted to focus on competition, not improving the status of the world's disabled citizens”(p.58). Again the focus within Paralympic sport is on the sport, not the disability.

It is argued that sport can be a vehicle for social mobility as a potential way out of the 'disability ghetto' (Page et. al., 2001). Yet, faith in Paralympic sport to act as a tool for addressing social issues of disability (see Steadward and Foster, 2003) can at times be ill-conceived. In this instance, to achieve empowerment through creation of a paradox that elite disabled athletes are not disabled (see Berger, 2004; Huang and Brittain, 2006), arguably serves to disenfranchise other impaired individuals seeking empowerment for themselves.

### Summary

This chapter charted how disability is a contested social issue. This was initially illustrated through considering the importance of using appropriate terminology to articulate disability. Two contrasting theoretical models for understanding disability were then discussed. The utility of using the term 'the disabled' to refer to the broad population of individuals with different impairments was then explored. Subsequently, the potential for the Paralympic Movement to generate social change for disabled people was discussed. This discussion focussed on empowerment and the possibility that Paralympians do not identify as disabled. Bourdieu's sociocultural theory will

provide the sociological foundation to this research and will now be discussed.

## **Review of Literature:** **Use of Bourdieu's Sociological Theory**

I will utilise aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory to explore and critically analyse the Paralympic Movement. This chapter will, firstly, discuss the thought process behind my decision to use Bourdieu's sociological theory, as opposed to other theories. Secondly, Bourdieu's understanding and use of 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field', which are the key concepts that will be utilised in this research, will be outlined. I will then highlight and respond to some criticisms and perceived limitations of Bourdieu's theory. Subsequently, I assert that a Paralympic field exists, the basis for which will then be discussed.

### **Bourdieu's sociological theory**

Pierre Bourdieu's socio-cultural theory provides a conceptual tool-kit with which to take apart and examine, either individually or collectively, many aspects of the social world (Jenkins, 1992). This utility is arguably apparent as Bourdieu has applied his social concepts and subsequent theory widely across a range of social phenomena. His work includes research into the media (Bourdieu, 1998a, 1998b), use of language (Bourdieu, 1991) as well as social class and its impacts within sport (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984, 1993). I selected Bourdieu's sociological theory, instead of using the work of other theorists, for several reasons which will now be outlined.

Bourdieu's work has been informed and shaped by several key social theorists, including Karl Marx<sup>20</sup>. It may be asserted that as Bourdieu's understanding of social phenomena is influenced by the work of Marx, Bourdieu is some form of neo-Marxist. If categorised as a neo-Marxist, Bourdieu, like many neo-Marxists, could be deemed susceptible to criticisms of applying economic reductionism, through a disproportionate focus on the means of production, when explaining the nature of social constructs. However, Bourdieu's theoretical understanding of social phenomena attributes attention and causality to social factors other than those directly tied to the means of production and economic resources. Bourdieu seeks to

explore and explain the variability of socialisation and social tastes, not through economic determinism, but via an appreciation of the social, cultural and symbolic value systems that can become embodied and help structure social behaviour (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990b, 1997; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu articulates the possible existence of differential power relations, not solely based on economic capital, but instead influenced by *selective* cultural and symbolic perceptions of the value of a particular body and/ or behaviour (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990a, 1990b; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) .

While the work of Marx and neo-Marxists prioritise the role of socio-economic status in understanding social constructs, many theorists have considered other means of social stratification as the basis for explaining the nature of certain social contexts. For example, some believe gender relations should be investigated to help explain the rationale behind the development of certain social constructs (Hargreaves, 1994, 2000; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Other researchers have deemed race to be a determining factor in the nature of certain social settings (Hoberman, 1997). It was believed that for this research topic a focus on the distinguishing features attributed to gender and/ or race relations was not justifiable, with other factors perceived to have a greater role in the development and perception of the Paralympic Movement. In accordance with differential means of social stratification, it can be argued this research could have perhaps utilised some aspects of a sociological understanding of disability.

The 'social model of disability' (Oliver, 1990) has been prominent in guiding and seeking to re-calibrate social perceptions of impairment and disability. As such this model could have been utilised for this research. However, the 'social model of disability' (Oliver, 1990) would have been, in my opinion, too crude an instrument to fully investigate the social perceptions and understandings of the Paralympic Movement. The social model argues that disability is a social response to bodily impairment (Barnes 1996; Oliver, 1990). However, by doing so, this theory lacks the sophistication to explain possible differences between impairment groups. Arguably, in the same

respects deviancy theory (Becker, 1973) could have been employed to investigate what some may consider to be a marginal, if not abnormal and therefore deviant, elite sporting competition for individuals with impairments. Deviancy theory argues that deviation from an accepted norm makes some individuals and social constructs susceptible to differential treatment based on their perceived abnormality (Becker, 1973). However, this theory again lacks the capacity to consider differences between individuals in, and perceptions of, the Paralympic Movement which contains a range of sports and impairment groups. If all impaired athletes are viewed as 'outsiders' (Becker, 1973) how then are perceived differences between athletes with different impairments explained. For example, when analysing the perceptions of performances by a wheelchair racer compared to a runner with cerebral palsy, how are perceptual differences explainable through deviancy theory other than via a somewhat ineffective suggestion that all impaired athletes are outsiders, although some are more 'outside' than others.

In light of the issues discussed above, it was felt that Bourdieu's sociological theory provided the appropriate conceptual tools with which to carry out this social investigation into the development of the Paralympic Movement. Bourdieu's sociological theory provides the opportunity for a researcher to consider how individuals formulate their own subjective opinions, while they, and the researcher, operates within a particular social environment. Bourdieu's theory appreciates the importance of economics but does not allow monetary factors to dominate, with other factors, including an individual's culturally-defined tastes, social connections and symbolic perceptions, used to analyse social constructs. The specific aspects of Bourdieu's sociological theory that will be utilised within this research project will now be discussed.

### Habitus, Capital and Field

Within this research, I will utilise three key conceptual tools used and refined by Pierre Bourdieu, namely 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field'. These three concepts will now each be explained in turn.

### *Habitus*

Habitus is a fundamental concept employed by Bourdieu to explain how individuals interact with and understand the social world. His use of habitus represents an attempt to re-articulate the well versed false dichotomy of agency/ structure, which can simplify and stifle sociological endeavour. Wacquant (1993) describes habitus to be “a way of circumnavigating – the vexing dilemma of structure and agency”(p.238). Bourdieu (1984) states:

habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the *product of internalization of the division into social classes* (p.170; italics my emphasis).

Thus, Bourdieu's use of habitus attempts to articulate how an individual's socialisation causes social rules and structures to become embodied frames of reference which influence behaviour, in a seemingly unconscious manner. Social classifications are taken into an individual's habitus and shape how they react and relate to subsequent stimuli, events and people. Habitus is 'second nature' as Bourdieu (1977) outlines: “one of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning (sens) of practices and the world”(p.80). It is vital to *unmake* the apparently neutral ties of objectivity and allegedly self-evident social facts; Bourdieu (1993) states habitus to be:

a system of dispositions acquired by implicit or explicit learning which functions as a system of generative schemes, generates strategies which *can* be objectively consistent with the objective interests of their authors without having been expressly designed to that end...they are not at all aware of fulfilling a duty, still less of seeking to maximize their (specific) profit. So they enjoy the additional profit of seeing themselves and being seen as totally disinterested (p.76; italics my emphasis).

This interpretation of habitus could be seen as a constraining form of false consciousness, but also an articulation of how certain decisions and actions

can be viewed as 'second nature'. Without seemingly conscious thought an individual reacts to a situation because of the habitus they have developed during their life experiences. As Bourdieu (1977) explains: "the 'unconscious' is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces in the second natures of habitus"(p.78-9). Individuals, while acting autonomously within social relations, remain tied and influenced by the social structures in which they have developed. Through an understanding of habitus it becomes possible to appreciate, for example, the difficulty for a social researcher to detach themselves fully from their subject matter<sup>21</sup>: "the world encompasses me (*me comprend*) but I comprehend it (*je le compris*) precisely *because* it comprises me. It is because this world has produced me, because it has produced the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears to me as self-evident" (Wacquant, 1992:8; italics in original).

Other authors<sup>22</sup> have helped articulate the complex concept of habitus as used by Bourdieu. Laberge and Kay (2002) state for Bourdieu: "habitus provides the basic cognitive categories and action frames through which people think about and respond to the social world" (p.248). Jenkins (1992) asserts:

the habitus *disposes* actors to do certain things, it provides a *basis* for the generation of practices. Practices are produced in and by the encounter between the habitus and its dispositions, on the one hand, and the constraints, demands and opportunities of the social field or market to which the habitus is appropriate or within which the actor is moving, on the other (p.78; italics in original).

Thus, habitus is *both* facilitative and restricting as it is; "a mediating construct, not a determined or a determining one" (Laberge and Kay, 2002:247). Through habitus, Bourdieu is communicating "the mixture of freedom and constraint which characterises social interaction" (Jenkins, 1992:72). It is important to appreciate habitus as an expression of both freedom and constraint, not as a reductive doctrine inhibiting individual social expression. Webb et al. (2001) reiterate: "the most crucial aspect of habitus, then, is that

it *naturalises* itself and the cultural rules, agendas and values that make it possible.” (p.40; italics my emphasis). It is essential to view society as the constantly re-making consequences of nature *and* nurture. While society and social constructs, for example the Paralympic Movement, can perhaps appearing self-evident and natural (i.e. not explicitly man-made), this is far from accurate, as individuals and groups continually impact upon the manifestation and alteration of social constructs, continually influenced by their habitus and personal tastes.

An individual's habitus facilitates them to decipher their (social) *taste*. Bourdieu (1984) states:

taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing, language or body hexis.(p.173)

According to Bourdieu (1993) taste manifests itself “as choices made among practices (sports, pastimes, etc.) and properties (furniture, hats, ties, books, pictures, spouses, etc.)”(p.108). As such taste is expressed through desire and consumption of goods; products that can considered to be: “in 'good' or 'bad' taste, 'distinguished' or 'vulgar' – classified and thereby classifying, hierarchized and heirarchizing” (Bourdieu, 1993:108). Hence, goods consumed and relationships forged can signify an individual's taste to others. Items may be bought conspicuously by an individual to 'show' others their 'good' taste and/ or willingness to be identified as part of a certain lifestyle and/or culture (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993). Taste(ful)<sup>23</sup> products may also be socially constructed professions (e.g. policeman, doctor, traffic warden, professional footballer) to which individuals apply conceptual hierarchies to distinguish their different tastes, continually informed by their habitus (Bourdieu, 1978). In relation to this research project, the uptake of sporting practices can be considered to act as taste signifiers. To participate in a certain sport, at a specific level, will provide an individual with a particular social status and in turn quench, to some extent, a particular thirst or social



desire. For Bourdieu, the value judgements applied to the uptake of certain behaviours (including sports) can be explained, in part, through an appreciation of the different forms of capital that are available from different behaviours and connections with particular social constructs (Bourdieu, 1977, 1978, 1990). The influential concept of 'capital' will now be discussed.

### *Capital(s)*

Capital(s), as defined by Bourdieu (1997), is a key concept that proficiently acts as a highly insightful and effective tool for sociological investigation. Bourdieu (1993, 1997) uses capital to discuss and explain issues of inter-relation, interdependence and power within social configurations. The reasons for two or more individuals and/or groups to relate with each other and co-exist together are revealed through considering the flows of capital that are facilitated and/or prohibited by certain social relations. The concept of capital(s) has been perceived as an innovative and useful recognition that within society *many* forms of power exist (Laberge and Kay, 2002). As Mahar et al. (1990) outline:

the definition of capital is very wide for Bourdieu and includes material things (which can have symbolic value), as well as 'untouchable' but culturally significant attributes such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), along with cultural capital (defined as culturally-valued taste and consumption patterns) (p.13).

These multiple forms of capital allow the social researcher to view social constructs through different lenses and help provide sophisticated interpretations of social phenomena. It is important to note that *all* practices will be influenced by different capitals. For example, the uptake of certain sporting practices can provide different forms and volumes of capital which will influence individual choices made in pursuit of distinction (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984, 1990b).

By deviating from a solitary focus on economic resources, Bourdieu allows a deeper account of social phenomena and prevents mere economic reductionism from closing down discursive debate (Bourdieu, 1997). The

importance of economic power is however certainly not ignored. Bourdieu uses the term 'economic capital' to identify the economic resources for example money, financial payments and revenue streams that flow through fields and sub-fields<sup>24</sup> and have an influence over the topography of a field. However, Bourdieu argues that economics cannot be seen as the sole causal factor in defining, creating and sustaining social relations. According to Bourdieu (1993) "in some games (in the intellectual field, for example, in order to win a literary prize or the esteem of one's peers), economic capital is inoperative. To become operational it has to undergo a transmutation." (p.33) Here Bourdieu (1993) is referring to how individuals and groups invest their economic capital, along with their time and effort, into actions that seek to achieve aims or objectives that cannot be fulfilled with economic capital alone. As such, economic capital can be seen to be fused with other social actions to generate alternative forms of capital which can then be *used and/or traded* within and between fields. These alternative forms of capital include social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1997).

The notion of social capital is a well-known and frequently used commodity within social relations for many people, although it is often referred to using a different word. In introducing the term, Bourdieu (1993) states: "one can give an intuitive idea of it [social capital] by saying that it is what ordinary language calls '*connections*'" (p.32; italics my emphasis). To elaborate on this, according to Bourdieu (1997); "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p.51). The social acquaintances and relations forged between individuals and/ or groups can provide either party with a degree of social status. Knowledge of the social connections one possesses can be used in social encounters with others to persuade and/ or negotiate the attainment of a particular good or service. The initiation and sustainment of these social relations, the attainment and continued possession of social capital, may entail the use of financial resources (economic capital). However, this may be considered *profitable* if the economic expenditure

translates into usable social capital for the individual and/ or group. Another form of capital, used by Bourdieu, to understand social relations, is cultural capital.

Cultural capital refers to the culturally valued tastes, consumption patterns and actions stemming from belonging to a certain group (Bourdieu, 1997; Mahar et. al, 1990). Bourdieu (1997) often discusses cultural capital in the context of his work on educational systems, for example schools and universities:

With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-a-vis its bearer and even vis-a-vis the cultural capital he (sic) effectively possesses at a given moment in time (p.50-51).

Here, Bourdieu (1997) is referring to how belonging to an educational institution facilitates an individual to accumulate cultural capital in the form of educational qualifications. As an individual progresses through the educational system they will attain differing levels of cultural capital, and can therefore have their cultural capital measured in relation to others progressing through, and/ or outside of, the educational system. This notion of accumulating cultural capital as you progress through a distinctive social system can arguably be applied to sport. Individuals progress through a sport and have their cultural capital judged by their position within that sport in relation to the achievements of others and the different levels within the sport. For example, an individual who is a professional, international long distance runner and Olympic champion, is likely to possess greater *volumes* of cultural capital attributable to their position within their sport, than for example a recreational long distance runner who runs 2-3 times a week alone each morning. Within this discussion of cultural capital it is important to be aware that; “cultural capital is not set in stone or universally accepted” (Webb et al., 2004:22). The cultural capital attained through certain actions within specific situations may prove positive in some scenarios, but meaningless or even

negative in other social settings. To illustrate this, it can be argued affiliation to a particular sport or sports team can be seen as a positive cultural asset for some athletes. However, being involved in a certain sport can also act as a source of resentment and generate conflict with others. This is particularly evident in sociological investigations relating to experiences of athletes within different sporting subcultures, the most obvious examples being the experiences of some female athletes in male-dominated sports (Cox and Thompson, 2001).

In particular situations, it may be argued that social and cultural capital may each be transformed to generate further economic capital, as often seen with athletes negotiating employment and sponsorship contracts. However, social and cultural capital can mutually exclusively also be perceived to be transformed into what Bourdieu refers to as *symbolic capital*. Symbolic capital is defined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) as “the form that one or another of these species [economic, social, cultural capital] takes when it is grasped through categories of perception that *recognize* its specific logic or, if you prefer, *misrecognize* the arbitrariness of its possession and accumulation”(p.119; italics in original). It is asserted that prestige, status and authority can all be referred to as examples of symbolic capital (Mahar et al, 1990). The transformation of another capital into legitimate symbolic capital is reliant upon an individual’s perception of that capital. Bourdieu (1997) states: “symbolic capital...presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity.”(p.56). As such, symbolic capital is arguably the most contested form of capital. While one individual or group may deem they possess the type and volume of cultural capital that justifies a legitimate claim of possession of symbolic capital, this claim may be refuted by others with a different perception, and reserve, of that specific cultural capital. For example, the cultural capital of being the women's singles tennis champion at Wimbledon it has been argued and enacted<sup>25</sup> justifies prize money (economic capital) and equal status and prestige (as an elite performer at the pinnacle of their sport) as is afforded to the men's singles tennis champion at Wimbledon. However, it may still be argued that as women tennis players still only play

the best of three sets, not the best of five as the men do, they do not have a legitimate claim to either equal prize money (economic capital) nor equal status, prestige and authority (symbolic capital) as afforded to male champions.

It is important to note that the potential 'profits' from possession of certain forms of capital is inextricably influenced by the social setting in which the capital exists. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) state: "a capital does not exist and function except *in relation to a field*" (p.101; italics my emphasis). To facilitate capital exchange inter-relation mechanisms for co-existence and/or interdependence are required. The allocation of individuals and resources across space, and influenced by time, is articulated through Bourdieu's notion of field which will now be discussed.

### *Field*

The differentials that exist within and between social spaces can be articulated further using Bourdieu's concept of *field*. In defining what a 'field' is, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) state:

a field may be defined as a network , or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) (p.97; italics in original).

As such *field* as a concept can be seen to de-limit the incomprehensible totality of human existence into a more manageable topic for study. Laberge and Kay (2002), when articulating their interpretation of Bourdieu's concept, state fields are: "arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge or status centred on a particular issue (e.g. literature, art, educational system, sport), and the network (or configuration) of historical relations of power between positions held by individuals, social groups or institutions"(p.253). Hence, fields have the capacity to change. Moreover, fields are not static, unchanging monoliths but vibrant, complex, ever-

changing sites for sociological enquiry. The tensions that form and alter fields are alluded to by Bourdieu (1998a) commenting:

a field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field (p.40-41).

In order to unpack and better understand the concept of field, several key aspects of fields will now be considered.

One important factor to remain conscious of throughout this research is the specificity of fields. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), *fields* are: “spaces of objective relations that are the site of a logic and a necessity that are *specific and irreducible* to those that regulate other fields” (p.97; italics in original). This social hierarchy or configuration of social organisations which structures a field is based on some form of shared interest or common desire that encourages or forces groups within a field to interact and interrelate. It is argued that; “the field acts, for Bourdieu, as a prism, refracting external forces, or converting demands from the broader field of power (the state, dominant economic classes) *into a logic and currency befitting its own social topology.*” (Prior, 2000:143; italics my emphasis). Bourdieu (1993) states: “capital is effective *in relation to* a particular field, and therefore within the limits of that field, and that is only convertible into another kind of capital on certain conditions” (p.73; italics in original). Hence, the selectivity and specialisation of fields becomes apparent as some products generated within a certain field may not have the same value in a different field (Webb et al 2004).

Linked to the specificity of fields, the structure and changes occurring within a field are shaped through consensual and conflicting relations. Bourdieu (1993) argues: “in every field we shall find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition”(p.72). Fields operate as a

focal point for individuals and groups to seek, attain, produce and compete for goods and services. As such, it is stated that fields are: “competitive arenas, social networks of conflict in which players manoeuvre to conserve or augment their address in relation to others in the same space” (Prior, 2000:143). It is important to remain sensitized to the fact that field relations, as highlighted by Bourdieu (1993), if to be fully understood, possess a temporal dimension: “the structure of the field is a *state* of the power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle, or, to put it another way, a state of the distribution of the specific capital which has been accumulated in the course of previous struggles and which orients subsequent strategies” (p.73; italics in original). The battles for power, and ultimate pursuit for dominant power within a field, will influence individual and group behaviours and subsequently which individuals and organisations will enter into, co-exist in and exit from, a particular field. In this regard, Bourdieu (1993) comments:

struggles which take place within the field are about the monopoly of the legitimate violence (specific authority) which is characteristic of the field in question, which means, ultimately, the conservation or subversion of the structure of the distribution of the specific capital (p.73).

It is important to remain aware of the inevitable influence of both habitus and capital within fields. In relation to habitus and field, Bourdieu (1993) states: “in order for a field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on”(p.72). An individual’s habitus will continually play a significant role in decoding knowledge and experiences from within a field, influencing their subsequent actions.

The role of capital within a field is pivotal. It has been commented that a field is: “simultaneously a space of competition for resources (economic capital) and rewards (symbolic capital) and of struggle for dominant positions.”(Laberge and Kay, 2002:254). Within the field there will be

individuals and groups that are producing a commodity and/ or product deemed valuable. An individual or group may attempt to gain contact with and/ or control over this item or service and/or be associated with it, thereby accessing economic, cultural and or social capital, potentially even symbolic capital. A field is the social battleground where consensual and conflicting alliances form to produce, negotiate and compete for multiple streams of capital. The competition for capital that occurs within fields is pivotal as: “the amount of power a person has within a field depends on that person's position within the field, and the amount of capital she or he possesses” (Webb et al., 2001:23). Hence, fields can be seen to encapsulate a range of key players, individuals and groups, who are both reliant on, but also in competition with, various members of a field. Competition within fields leads to alliances and apparent foes, as individuals and groups within a field seek to accrue and safeguard existing reserves of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital.

I would argue Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field act as useful sociological tools with which to undertake social research for several reasons. Firstly, habitus provides a useful conceptualisation of the inter-relationship between individual and society without simplifying this relationship to a false dichotomy. The existence of multiple capitals provides a sophisticated tool which can be applied to understand and explore social relations from varying perspectives through considering what worth, be that economic, social, cultural or symbolic, particular social actions possess. Field provides a contextualised basis which allows social research to remain specific and relevant to the social construct being explored, rather than generating large scale generalisations that ignore the nuanced nature of social existence.

The aforementioned concepts used by Bourdieu each individually and/ or in combination have an important role to play in guiding this sociological investigation into the Paralympic Movement. In summary, an individual's habitus will be affected by their position within a field, with a differential appreciation of capital(s) as people access and interpret fields in different



ways for different purposes. Interactions within and between fields impact upon the development of habitus, and the particular exchanges of capital that are possible, within a particular field.

Although so far the merits of Bourdieu's sociological concepts have been highlighted, it is however the case, as with all social theories, that the work of Pierre Bourdieu has and will continue to be subject to certain criticisms. Some critical comments concerning Bourdieu's contribution to sociology will now be discussed.

### Critiques of Bourdieu

The common criticisms levelled at Bourdieu can often be divided into two groups, namely issues of expression and secondly ideological disagreement. Firstly, the ways in which Bourdieu articulates his ideas have been highlighted as a limitation to understanding and using his theory (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993, 1999; Harker et al. 1990; Laberge and Kay, 2002). At the outset, it is important to note that Bourdieu wrote his theories in French and as such English speaking scholars are reliant upon translations of these texts. It may be argued that to fully understand the meanings behind Bourdieu's work one must read the original, rather than an English translation that is arguably an interpretation of what Bourdieu wrote originally in French. However, due to my limited knowledge of French as well as the inevitability of having to, if wanting to be published in English speaking countries, eventually translating for oneself Bourdieu's ideas into English for the audience to understand, makes translation arguably an unavoidable issue. Translation aside, Bourdieu's style of writing has been criticised. Laberge and Kay (2002) comment: "Bourdieu's writing style is tortuous. His sentences are often long and abstract, and charged with polemic, paradox, multiple negation and pun"(p.261). It is also asserted that Bourdieu's work can be criticised as too often straying into the realm of tautology (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993, 1999; Harker et al. 1990), namely a tendency to re-articulate the same idea but using different words to do so. It may be argued this style of writing helps provide the reader with a better *feel* for the concept being discussed. However, Bourdieu's failure to provide a succinct definition of a conceptual

term perhaps leads to the use of tautology merely heightening the confusion surrounding the actual meaning of a term. It has been argued that at times Bourdieu provides circular definitions of his conceptual terms which fail to provide a succinct and definite explanation of the intended meaning behind a term. Harker et al. (1990) provide evidence of this by considering how capital is explained by Bourdieu: “capital is something that is struggled for – what is capital? Capital is that which people value and (therefore) struggle for. What is strategy and struggle about? It is the activity that people engage in, in order to gain the necessary volumes of capital to achieve their aims” (p.215)

With regards to defining his conceptual terms, such as habitus, capital and field, I would argue it is for the reader to interpret Bourdieu's readings and make their own decisions as to the true meaning lying behind his comments. It is then incumbent upon the researcher to use Bourdieu's terms as they see fit to make a persuasive argument, through their research, for the validity in choosing, and utility in using, Bourdieu's sociological concepts. In some respects this process of theory interpretation is a constant within social research as we all have to interpret the social world for ourselves. Furthermore by allowing individuals some degree of freedom to interpret social theory for themselves arguably improves its utility and the ability to use the same theory across a range of social situations. In relation to this assertion, Laberge and Kay (2002) state: “Bourdieu is forcefully opposed to the dogmatism that eventually leads to a sclerosis of thought. Accordingly, his concepts are open, adaptable, even 'blurred', rather than operationally defined, and used rigidly. Yet, this [approach] is clearly at risk of generating confusion and ambiguity” (p.261). The scope for interpretation, it has been argued, leads to misunderstanding and varied use of the same concept; Wacquant (1993) states in regards to habitus that: “readers differ widely in their appraisal of its [habitus's] meaning and function”(p.238).

The interpretations made of Bourdieu's sociological theory have led to criticisms concerning the underlying ideology and purpose behind Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu has been accused of “political agnosticism” by some authors (Harker et. al., 1990). An apparent non-commitment to predicting possible

futures, or explicitly stating the possible mechanisms or necessary actions to enact social change, has led to criticisms of Bourdieu's sociological work being considered subject to functionalism and somewhat deterministic. The label of dynamic functionalism is applied to Bourdieu's work by Harker et al. (1990) who state: "Bourdieu's is a dynamic functionalism – fields change their composition and their actors; the volumes and compositions of capitals may alter. Yet the needs of the system, the needs for struggle, positions and capitals remain" (p.217)

Stemming from a functionalist perception of Bourdieu's understanding of the world, Bourdieu's sociological theory has been considered overly deterministic. The concept of habitus can possibly be seen as a 'second natured' false consciousness; a dream that one cannot wake from because one does not know that one is asleep (see Bourdieu, 1993:76). I would argue however that habitus is fluid and open to change and alterable through self-realisation. By appreciating the importance of individual interpretation, rather than solely focussing on the failings of objective structures, I would assert Bourdieu concentrates on the individual's role within the creation and interpretation of social structures thereby highlighting the relative power of the individual and potential for self-reflection and subjective thought. This is apparent in Bourdieu's (1993) articulation of field: "those who dominate the field have the means to make it function to their advantage; *but they have to reckon with the resistance of the dominated agents*" (p.88; italics my emphasis). Hence, the complex, multifaceted and multiple experiences of individual interaction with social structures are again apparent.

Other critics choose to highlight Bourdieu's determinism through his articulation of the pursuit of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1997). It is argued by some authors that by stating individual's life decisions are all shaped by the pursuit of symbolic capital places an objective constraint, that of symbolic capital being the *raison d'etre* for a particular action, on decisions which are interpretative and subjective (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1999). However, the ability to transform various forms of capitals; economic, cultural and/ or social, arguably highlights how Bourdieu's theory provides an outline

of possibility within social life, with symbolic capital still being an interpretative, not objective, form of capital and thus open to interpretation and a degree of self-control.

Overall, the criticisms outlined above I concede do have some relevance. In appreciation of the fact that Bourdieu's writings can at times not be concise and are potentially confusing, occasionally Bourdieu's concepts are articulated in this thesis using Bourdieu *and* other authors. It is appreciated as such this research is, at times, relying on the interpretations of others, nevertheless the clarity that these concise contributions from other authors provide more than justifies their inclusion. It is important that this social research is accessible and understandable if it is to prove useful. In addition, while Bourdieu's sociological theory may have been considered by some as present-centred and failing to look to the future, this research explicitly seeks to use Bourdieu's sociological concepts to outline possible pathways for the Paralympic Movement, thereby nullifying this specific potential criticism of Bourdieu's sociological theory. An appreciation of how others have used Bourdieu's sociological theory within the realm of research into disability sport will now be discussed.

#### Use of Bourdieu in disability sport

There has been only very limited use of Bourdieu's sociological theory within the study of disability sport. Howe's (2008a) title, *The Cultural Politics of the Paralympic Movement*, is the only published book, I am aware of to date, that has employed Bourdieu's theory to elite disability sport. Paralympic sport is explored by Howe (2008a) focussing on the notion of habitus. While appreciating the importance of habitus, this research will primarily focus on utilising Bourdieu's notions of capital and field to examine the changing structure of the Paralympic Movement.

The only other published work to use Bourdieu within the study of disability sport, that I have encountered, is Petri-Uy's (2008) chapter in Gilbert and Schantz (2008) (eds.) *The Paralympic Games: Empowerment or Side Show*. Petri-Uy (2008) makes a brief reference to Bourdieu's notion of 'field' when summing up a discussion into the development of sport for the disabled

in Kosovo (see Petri-Uy, 2008:227-228). The mention of Bourdieu's concept of field is so fleeting, so as to label the *use* of 'field' as ineffective. When *briefly* acknowledging Bourdieu's concept of field there is also no reference to the interplay of neither habitus nor capital within a field, thereby undermining any real critical advancement in understanding.

The relative absence of Bourdieu's sociological theory in the field of disability sport research can in part be explained by an overall paucity of sociological enquiry into disability sport, including the Paralympic Movement. While the Olympic Movement has proven a popular site of enquiry across academia, as yet its poorer associate, the Paralympic Movement, is yet to generate such a groundswell of opinion, interest and sociological investigation. It is hoped that this research, and the upcoming interest in the London 2012 Olympic and *Paralympic* Games, may help improve the volume and quality of social research into the Paralympic Movement and disability sport more generally. Bourdieu's concepts and critical reflections have been employed across a wide variety of social subjects and arenas; as such the use of aspects of Bourdieu's sociological theory in this particular research I would argue is not unfounded and will hopefully be justified, in large part, by the quality and utility of this research project's findings.

It is my belief that Bourdieu's sociological theory can be used to research elite disability sport because the theoretical concepts of habitus, capital and field provide the analytical tools to investigate the social structures and experiences as created by involvement with the Paralympic Movement. In particular I will use Bourdieu's concept of field to generate the basis for this research project. Subsequently I will incorporate an understanding of capital(s) and habitus to analyse and present the findings of this research project. The specific details of how I will use Bourdieu's sociological theory to underpin this research project will now be outlined.

### Paralympic Field

Based on my knowledge of the development of the Paralympic Movement (see chapter 2) and understanding of Bourdieu's sociological

theory (see above) I would argue that there exists a Paralympic field (see figure 1<sup>26</sup>).

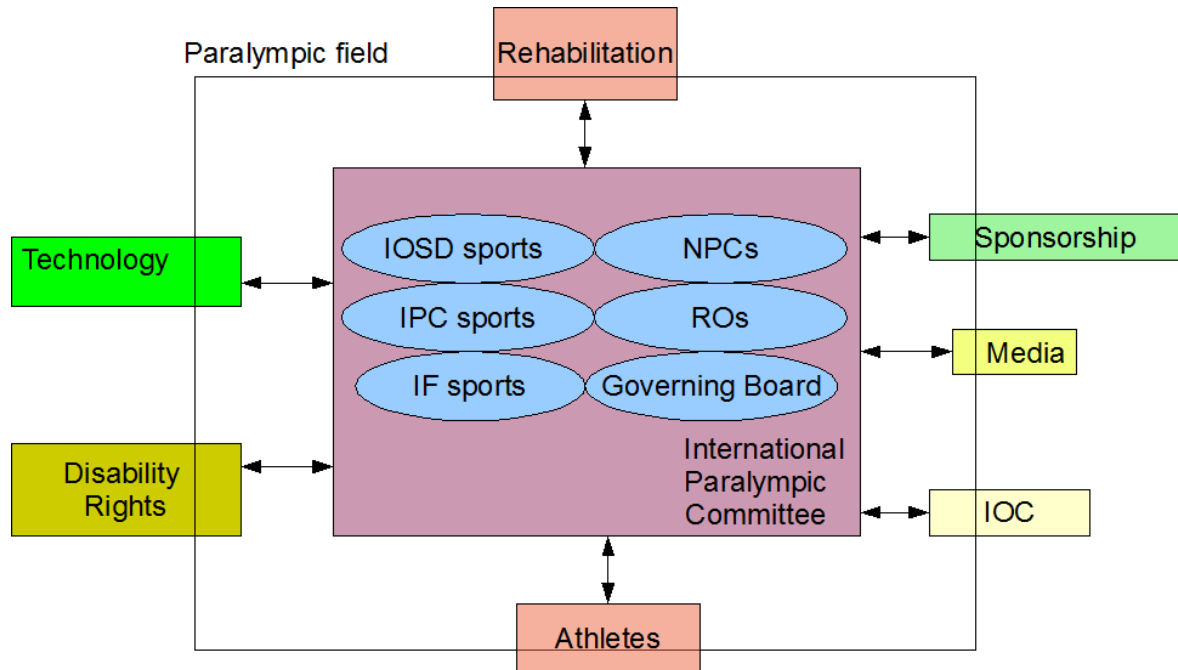


Figure 1: current Paralympic field

This cartographic representation of the Paralympic field shows the IPC sub-field and seven other sub-fields that surround it, which together generate the current Paralympic field.

At the centre of the Paralympic field is the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) sub-field<sup>27</sup>. Several groups exist within the IPC; namely there is the Governing Board (which includes, amongst others, the President of the IPC, Philip Craven). Within the IPC are Regional Organizations (ROs) that represent geographic regions e.g. Africa, Europe, Oceania, etc. There are National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) that are the national organizations recognized by the IPC as the sole representative of athletes with a disability in that country or territory, to the IPC. The IPC sub-field includes International Federations (IFs) which are independent sport federations recognized by the IPC as the sole world-wide representative of a sport for athletes with a disability that has been granted the status of a Paralympic Sport by the IPC. The IPC currently recognizes nine IFs including,

among others, the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF). Within the IPC there are also IPC Sports which are multi-disability sports for athletes with a disability, governed by the IPC under the management of an IPC Sports Committee, for example Paralympic swimming. There are International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSD) Sports which are sports for athletes with a disability on the Paralympic Programme governed by an International Organization of Sport for the Disabled. The IPC currently recognises seven such IOSD sports including Boccia, Goalball and Wheelchair Rugby.

The Paralympic field is generated from the IPC-sub field, and seven additional sub-fields that surround it, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC). I would argue the other sub-fields within the current Paralympic field are the media, sponsorship, rehabilitation, technology, disability rights and the athletes. The seven additional sub-fields exist both within and outside of the Paralympic field. These fields and sub-fields function at times in consensus, but also on occasions in conflict. This becomes more apparent as the Paralympic field is unpacked and field inter-relations are examined.

The basis for the existence of the current Paralympic field stems from synthesising Bourdieu's sociological concept of 'field' and the key individuals and groups involved within the development of the Paralympic Movement. Firstly, Webb et al. (2001) outline: "for Bourdieu, a field or sub-field is made up of *governing bodies, rules and regulations, and languages* which both influence practitioners and evaluate their activities" (p.184, italics my emphasis). In the context of the Paralympic field the dominant governing bodies are arguably the IPC and IOC. The IPC contains within it further member organizations such as IOSDs e.g. CP-ISRA, IBSA, etc. and national Paralympic committees e.g. British Paralympic Association. The IPC, IOC and related organizations shape Paralympic practices. It can also be argued that (in part stemming from the influence of disability rights but also due to its nature as a field including those with impairments) the Paralympic field possesses its own language; its own specific schema for effective

communication. This includes a reliance upon the use of specific (medical) jargon and the employment of 'person-first' terminology when, for example, conducting mediated interviews<sup>28</sup>. Individuals and organisations that exist in the Paralympic field, will influence the practices that occur within this field and also the interactions that occur with other fields. Identification of the eight key sub-fields within the Paralympic field (IPC, IOC, Media, Sponsorship, Rehabilitation, Technology, Disability Rights, Athletes) is based on the key members involved and the significant issues that the Paralympic Movement has encountered during its development (see chapter 2). The perceived validity of including each sub-field will be tested through the opinions and perceptions collected from members of the Paralympic field. It is anticipated that the key issues and discussion topics explored with research subjects will result from the complex interaction and interrelations within and between sub-fields of the Paralympic field.

To qualify my assertion, the cartographic representation of the Paralympic field (Figure 1) represents a 'snap shot' taken in time of the *current* Paralympic field. As such, it is envisaged and speculated later (see chapter 10) that this Paralympic field will continue to alter, with individuals and groups potentially entering, moving within and/or leaving the Paralympic field. As such it is important to see the current Paralympic field discussed in this document as a point in time, but not a definitive model of how the Paralympic field was historically nor will be in the future. In this regard, Bourdieu (1983) states:

The *boundary* of the field is a stake of struggles, and the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing-line between the agents involved in it....but to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents...one of the most significant properties of the field of cultural production, explaining its extreme dispersion and the conflicts between rival principles of legitimacy, is the extreme permeability of its frontiers (p.324; italics in original)

The ways in which members of the Paralympic field operate has been outlined previously (see chapter 2) and will be discussed in light of the data



collected (see chapters 7-10). To facilitate subsequent discussion, at this juncture, it is important to illustrate how the concept of habitus and capital can be applied to the context of the Paralympic field.

*Application of habitus to the current Paralympic field*

The concept of habitus, inevitably has a role to play when exploring the Paralympic field. For example, the experience of Paralympic sport, for athletes in particular, is heavily influenced by the different classification systems that operate within Paralympic sports, which are intended to enable fair sporting competition<sup>29</sup>. This arrangement of human bodies within Paralympic classification systems help illustrate how:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents...It is because the world has produced me, because it produces the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears to me as self-evident (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:127-8).

In order to become a Paralympic athlete individuals submit to the classification procedure which culminates with the ascription of individual membership to a particular class. Subsequently, the classification system becomes embodied, as Paralympic athletes self-identify as, for example, a *T11* 100metre runner, an *SB1* 50metre swimmer<sup>30</sup>, etc. As Laberge and Kay (2002) state: “the internalisation of the classifications, codes and implicit rules that structure society are the means through which the individual constructs his/her social identity, the affirmation of his/her *belonging* to social groups (defined by sex, age, occupation, ethnicity, or other) *and difference* from others.”(p.247; italics my emphasis). The classification procedure and actual experience of competing in Paralympic sport is a prominent example of how society is written into the body (Bourdieu, 1990a) as Paralympic athletes are separated from able-bodied competitors, and other impairment groups, both physically, economically and socially. Sporting classification systems within Paralympic sport illustrate how:

practices are produced in and by the encounter between the habitus and its dispositions, on the one hand, and the constraints, demands and opportunities of the social field or market to which the habitus is appropriate or within which the actor is moving, on the other.(Jenkins, 1992:78).

The particular habitus developed by a Paralympic athlete will be influenced, to some extent, by their classification. For other individuals not competing in the Paralympic Movement their perception and perceived importance of classification may be different to athletes. Some may deem classification an important issue to comprehend in order to understand the sporting performances they are watching. Meanwhile others, for example some spectators, may see classification as completely irrelevant to their experience of the Paralympic Games as the sporting contests, not the reasons for gathering together a particular group of athletes, maintains the viewers attention and focus. This discussion of *personal* experience and interpretation helps illustrate that within the Paralympic field the differential habitus that are developed may provide competing interpretations of both the current issues in Paralympic sport, as well as, the key factors affecting the future of the Paralympic Movement. Inevitably, the habitus possessed by an individual will have a role in comprehending the different forms of capital available and/ or desired by those involved in the Paralympic field. The potential forms of capital, as applied to the context of the Paralympic field, will now be outlined.

#### *Application of capital to the current Paralympic Field*

Economic capital can be seen to be created, and exchanged between groups and individuals within the Paralympic field, in a variety of ways, in varying quantities and with differing perceptions of importance. One obvious stream of economic capital is the financial revenue received by the IPC from the IOC (IOC, 2010). Economic capital is also gained by Paralympic stakeholders from other sources. For example, the British Paralympic Association receives funding from the national Lottery, sponsorship and fundraising (see BPA, 2010).

Another form of capital, namely social capital, is also sought and accessed in various ways. The importance of the links the IPC possesses

with the IOC can be adjudged to be an important nexus from which social capital can be amassed. The veracity and perceived strength of this social link with the IOC will influence perceptions of social capital. For example, although the Paralympic athletes use the same venues as the Olympic competitors, they do so some three weeks later than the Olympic athletes and are not permitted to compete, unless fulfilling certain criteria<sup>31</sup>, alongside Olympic athletes. As such the interlinking between, and perceived similarities of, Paralympic and Olympic athletes is debateable. These factors have a bearing on the credibility and thus volume of social capital that can be perceived to be accrued through the IPC and IOC *connection*.

The exchange of cultural capital throughout the Paralympic field can be seen to be multifaceted. It is, firstly, important to appreciate that cultural capital can exist in three forms namely the embodied state, objectified state and institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 1993, 1997). Some embodied social capital is arguably possessed by individuals who have been classified as 'Paralympic' bodies and are able to compete in Paralympic competitions. In relation to this, objectified cultural capital can also be considered a by-product of being a Paralympian and attending a Paralympic Games. This objectified cultural capital arguably increases when an athlete wins a Paralympic medal at a Paralympic Games. Institutionalized cultural capital is on show when the Paralympic Movement creates sporting competitions for the Paralympic field. By sanctioning a Paralympic Games or Paralympic World Cup, the IPC invests these specific competitions with the institutionalized cultural capital that stems from competing in an official Paralympic sports event. The status of the IPC accreditation means these sporting events (the Paralympic Games and Paralympic World Cup) arguably possess greater cultural capital compared to other disability sport competitions not organised by the IPC.

There is the potential for accruing symbolic capital from economic, social and/ or cultural capital within the Paralympic field. Arguably, those Paralympic athletes that can identify, and be perceived by others, as *legitimate* elite, high performance sportsmen/women will receive the corresponding status and prestige that they are perceived to warrant.

Attempts to identify as *legitimate* elite, high performance sports may cause some sports and/or athletes to emphasise their similarities with other seemingly legitimate models of elite sport, namely Olympic sports and Olympians.

Within the Paralympic field, when discussing capital, there should be an awareness that:

the hierarchy of the different species of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) varies across the various fields. In other words, there are cards that are valid, efficacious in all fields – these are the fundamental species of capital – but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:198).

As such, it is important, for this researcher, to be sensitized to the multifaceted interpretations of the existence and quantities of capitals that are mediated and exchanged across the Paralympic field, as individuals and groups possessing different habitus inter-relate and co-exist.

It is important to remember that co-existence is not a synonym for consensus. Indeed conflicts are key features to the development of fields. Intra/ inter-field conflicts are inescapable, to some extent, due to the differentials in habitus and taste that exist between individuals, and those within organisations, that exist within sub-fields and fields. Bourdieu (1998a) states: “all the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies”(p.40-41). The disparities between subjective judgements regarding the 'worth' or 'value', in terms of capital(s), of a particular facet of social life are endemic and can be highly significant in shaping the social topography of the Paralympic field. For example, it may be argued that Paralympic athletes possess high levels of cultural and even symbolic capital from their sporting performance. However, some may interpret their 'worth' very differently. A media company looking to market the Paralympic Games will place an economic value upon the athletic population and perhaps even differentiate between individual athletes. This economic

value is likely to be influenced by perceptions of the athletes' symbolic capital (influenced by the ability of the athlete to represent the 'image' of an elite sportsman/woman) and cultural capital (affected by the individuals 'belonging' to an athletic population and/or a particular disability group). Meanwhile the incumbent economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital possessed by the media company itself may seemingly dwarf that possessed by the athletes and even the IPC, leading to the media company occupying a dominant position of influence within the Paralympic field.

Differential power relations, stemming from variable capital reserves and changing perceptions about the capital(s) possessed by others, unsurprisingly generates conflict within fields. Webb et al. (2001) remind us that a field is “constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field, and how capital is to be distributed”(p.22). The fluid nature of fields means that for an individual and/ or organization to maintain their position even just within the field, aside from retaining their power status, they must constantly strive to safeguard existing capital(s) and compete for further capital(s). In this regard, Prior (2000) states: “fields, then, are competitive arenas, social networks of conflict in which players manoeuvre to conserve or augment their address in relation to others in the same space”(p.143). I would assert that the Paralympic field is not exempt from these battles in this respect, and is predicated on members of the Paralympic field forging consensual relations and negotiating areas of conflict.

### Summary

This research project will use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to critically analyse data collected from members of the Paralympic field concerning their perceptions of the current issues, and possible future developments, for the Paralympic Movement.

Overall, reviewing aspects of Bourdieu's sociological theory (chapter 4), together with literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement (chapter 2) and social perceptions of disability (chapter 3) has

helped inform and thus provides a platform on which to achieve the aim and objectives of this research.

The current chapter has demonstrated how Bourdieu's sociological theory can provide a useful framework with which to de-construct and critically examine the Paralympic Movement, thereby meeting the research aim and objectives of this project. The concept of the Paralympic field, detailed in this chapter, along with the review of literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement (chapter 2) has helped begin to meet the objective to identify and explore the relationships between some core constituents involved in shaping the Paralympic Movement. Using Bourdieu's sociological theory (chapter 4) and being sensitized to the social perceptions of disability both in broad society and as applied to Paralympic sport (chapter 3) has established a foundation from which to seek to achieve the aim and objectives of this research. As a whole, the review of literature (chapters 2-4) made a contribution to achieving the aim of this research project by improving our understanding and beginning to critically analyse the Paralympic movement.

Ultimately, the research aim and objectives will be fulfilled through appropriate and effective data collection and analysis. The decisions taken relating to the philosophical assumptions of knowledge, the actual data collection and analysis techniques used, as well as the experience of using these research techniques, will now be discussed.

## Methodology

The fulfilment of the research aim and objectives, while aided by the previous review of literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement (chapter 2), social perceptions of disability (chapter 3) and aspects of Bourdieu's sociological theory (chapter 4), depends significantly on the methodology utilised. Thus, the reasons for, and experiences of, using the selected method employed in this research project will now be discussed.

Firstly, some pertinent philosophical assumptions about knowledge will be explored. The actual data collection and analysis techniques used in this research will then be documented. Finally, the experience of using these research techniques will be discussed.

### Philosophy of Research

The *raison d'être* of research is to access, accumulate and analyse data. Within social research, this process of data collection and subsequent analysis, is shaped by the researcher's philosophical beliefs concerning the nature of social constructs as they are perceived to exist within society. This discussion will consider the influence of ontological and epistemological understandings of social phenomena, incorporating issues concerning notions of truth(s) and relativism.

### *Ontology*

Ontology questions the meaning that surrounds social phenomena. In practice, a core ontological question to consider is: "whether the 'reality' to be investigated is external to the individual – imposing itself on individual consciousness from without – or the product of individual consciousness; whether 'reality' is of an 'objective' nature, or the product of individual cognition" (Burrell and Morgan, 1985:1). A researcher may perceive that the *reality* of a social event is imposed upon individuals by an external force beyond the control of individuals, thus negating the capacity for someone to differentially interpret and react to a given social situation. Alternatively, researchers may believe individuals receive and appraise information in different ways. The same information may be decoded and given various

meanings by different individuals. Hence how information is *differentially* received, decoded and used *by* an individual is significant.

This research emphasises the importance of multiple individual appraisals of the same social construct. Interviewing a variety of individuals who have interacted with (and within) the Paralympic field, illustrates this project's adherence to the ideographic approach. Burrell and Morgan (1985) state: "the ideographic approach emphasizes the analysis of the subjective accounts which one generates by 'getting inside' situations and involving oneself in the everyday flow of life"(p. 6). Arguably the notion of getting 'inside' a social situation and involving one's self in the subject of study is often attributed to ethnographical research. However the degree of intimacy and potential immersion within social phenomena, via interviews, should not be under-estimated or belittled. The embodied immersion of the interviewer within interviewees' social worlds and cognitive frames of reference, presented through interviewees' comments and opinions, makes the interview method more conducive to entering an individual's 'everyday flow of life' than arguably, for example, content analysis of national newspaper articles. It is important to be clear that this is not a derisory statement. Paralympic media analysis, including the content analysis of newspaper reports, serves a purpose and has proved valuable in exploring the social perceptions of Paralympic sport (Schantz and Gilbert, 2001; Schell and Duncan, 1999; Schell and Rodriguez, 2001; Thomas and Smith, 2003). Instead, I endeavour to emphasise researchers will be influenced by their own ontological assumptions to focus on different aspects of a social phenomena and subsequently employ different research methods.

In accordance with my ontological understanding of knowledge, 'evidence' cannot be accumulated and analysed in a self-evident way for social research. Data is interpreted, results will remain contested and to some extent incomplete because of the multiplicity and perceived subjectivity of social phenomena. This researcher does not seek to provide a single, totalitarian statement of what the Paralympic Movement is and how it is received by everybody. Instead it is the subjectivity, the potential multiplicity



of individual cognition concerning the same social construct, the Paralympic Movement, which this researcher is exploring. This researcher considers interviews as a useful tool to access information, in a manner that permits respondents freedom to reply to several topics, in various ways and varying detail. The epistemological assumptions of this research will now be explored.

### *Epistemology*

Using semi-structured interviews reflects my ontological *and* epistemological assumptions of the nature and meaning of the Paralympic Movement. Epistemology is: “the branch of philosophy that deals with how knowledge of [such] phenomena is acquired” (Gratton and Jones, 2004:5). Burrell and Morgan (1985) state the influence of epistemological understandings of social phenomena centres around:

assumptions about the grounds of knowledge – about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings. These assumptions entail beliefs, for example, about the forms of knowledge that can be obtained, and how one can sort out what is regarded as 'true' from what is to be regarded as 'false'.(p.2)

Research into disability has been heavily influenced by medically-defined taxonomies of the body (Blaxter, 1996; Sullivan, 2005; Tremain, 2005; Turner, 1987, 1992). As such, disability becomes pathologised with a quantifiable and objective existence (Blaxter, 1996; Oliver, 1990; Paterson, and Hughes, 2000). Social research and political actions by disability rights activists, including the disabled people's movement, fundamentally based on an understanding of the 'social model of disability' (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2006; Tresgakis, 2002), has sought to argue disability is a consequence of social barriers and a social reaction to specific bodily impairments (Barnes, 1997; Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Oliver, 1990). As such, *disability* can arguably be understood as less definite and/or enduring, and more a result of contextual bodily interactions with differential

environments. Consequently, impairment and the notion of disability becomes a more contested concept.

Historically, differential explanations for, and understandings of, disability have been evident (Albrecht et al., 2001; Barnes, 1996; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Gleeson, 1999; Morris, 1969; Ryan and Thomas, 1980). For example prior to the modern medical explanations of impairment, Morris (1969) stated: “gross physical deformities such as dwarfism or hydrocephalus could be explained in folk law by the activities of witches and demons working spells or leaving changeling children in the night”(p.7).

More recently the capacity for impairment and disability to be more than an *objectively* defined medical condition/ abnormality affecting the body was apparent when, for example, in 2007 a two-year old girl born in India with four arms and four legs, was reportedly: “revered by some in her village as the reincarnation of a Hindu goddess” (Fox News, 2007). Although the child undertook surgery, to “leave her with a normal body”(Fox News, 2007), the socially specific appraisal of the girl's body provided by local residents helps illustrate the potential for society, in this case religious beliefs, to be “written into the body” (Bourdieu, 1990a:63). This further highlights the potential for subjective understandings of impairment to be just as *real* and influential as supposedly objective medicalised labels applied to different bodies. The potential for impaired bodies to be understood differentially and subjectively, depending on their status and perceived capacity to resemble a particular social identity, is particularly relevant within this research into the differential perceptions of, and hopes for, the Paralympic Movement.

In undertaking research to explore the perception(s) of the Paralympic Movement, it is conceivable that this research could have followed a common epistemological path, namely media analysis. The influence of the media in providing social appraisals, perceptions and commentaries of the Paralympic Movement has been widely documented (Darcy and Cashman, 2008a; Howe, 2008a; Schantz and Gilbert, 2001; Schell and Duncan, 1999; Schell and Rodriguez, 2001; Thomas and Smith, 2003, 2009). This research aims to bypass interpretations provided solely by the media and access social

perceptions through interviewing individuals more closely involved in the Paralympic Movement. This epistemological route helps avoid potential bias and inaccuracies which mediated sports reporting, perhaps sometimes centred on sensationalism (Coakley, 2003; Stead, 2003) and/ or nationalism (Blain et al. 1993; Maguire, 1999; Maguire and Poulton, 1999) may entail. By directly asking those involved, rather than an intermediary such as agents of the media, it may be argued a more representative and varied account of the social perceptions of the Paralympic Movement, held by those involved in the Paralympic field, can be gained. I assert it should be noted that the media do play an influential role in the generation of the Paralympic field. However, there is perhaps a risk within research that too much attention is focussed on media coverage, while the opinions of those involved in delivering Paralympic sport are overlooked and assumed to cohere with interpretations provided by the media. This researcher concedes the media is likely to have some influence upon the opinions expressed by members of the Paralympic field. Arguably the media is a potential confounding variable, and to some extent 'the elephant in the room', for all social research projects which seek to ascertain individual perspectives, opposed to the views of media professionals e.g. journalists. However, again this does not negate the use of interviews with those involved in the Paralympic field; if anything it reinforces the need for this type of research that places the opinions of individuals at the forefront, not the media's representation of Paralympic sport. When using opinions, I appreciate that this epistemological route leaves the findings of this study open to the criticism. It may be asserted that interviewees' opinions may not conform to their actions. For example, a disability sport administrator may state Paralympians are key stakeholders, while being complicit in ensuring no athletes are present at key meetings set up to negotiate, for example marketing and sponsorship deals. A discussion of whether this research is deductive and/or inductive will now be outlined.

### *Deductive and inductive*

When deliberating on research design and methods, the consideration of whether this research is inductive or deductive may arise. *Deductive*

research can be defined as: the “development of an idea, or hypothesis, from existing theory which can then be tested through the collection of data” (Gratton and Jones, 2004:26). Alternatively, *inductive* research is termed as undertaking research to “collect data, and analyse that data to develop a theory, model or explanation” (Gratton and Jones, 2004:27).

This project is identifiable as both deductive *and* inductive research. This researcher used the work of Pierre Bourdieu (theory) to develop the concept of a Paralympic field (idea) which was then explored by collecting interview responses (data). This description of the research process would seemingly identify this study as deductive. However, through the process of interviewing, the researcher is sensitized to the broad themes and issues that evolve from the collected interviews. The use of these ideas, previously undefined by the interviewer, makes this research to some extent inductive. For example, the researcher intended to explore the potential desires held by individuals for the future development of the Paralympic Movement. It was anticipated these would be similar issues and reflect the importance and influence of the relative sub-fields within the Paralympic Movement (deductive). However, the actual responses and ideas put forward by interviewees were not collected in the hope of supporting or rejecting a specific pre-defined hypothesis, but instead the consequence of open discussion with interviewees (inductive).

A blend of deductive and inductive elements within the same study is arguably inevitable. The inherent life experiences and appreciation of particular theoretical concepts that researchers' possess, possibly nullifies the potential for ever undertaking truly inductive research. It can be argued: “*we cannot hope to see the world outside of our place in it* – all that we can ever have are various points of view that reflect the interests, values and purposes of various groups of people”(Sparkes, 1992:27; italics my emphasis). The theoretical *place* from out of which the researcher operates is significant. Decisions made about research design and methods are influenced, to some extent, by the particular research paradigm chosen or adopted by the researcher (Patton, 1978). A brief paradigm debate will now ensue.

*Paradigm debate – Positivism vs Interpretativism*

Two paradigms commonly referred to within social research are a positivist approach and an interpretative approach to research (Popkewitz, 1984; Sparkes, 1992). These paradigms will now be outlined.

According to Popkewitz (1984), a positivist perspective asserts “the social world exists as a system of variables. These variables are distinct and analytically separable parts of one interacting system”(p.37). Subsequently, data is often quantitative with the assumption that “behaviours can be observed and numerically and objectively measured and analysed” (Gratton and Jones, 2004:21). However, undertaking positivist research to pursue objective data, an objective 'truth', in light of this researcher's aforementioned ontological and epistemological assumptions, is incompatible. I aim to access a multiplicity of subjective accounts, not one single authoritative view, from a variety of individuals operating across the Paralympic field. This is in pursuit of a better understanding of how individuals give their own meaning to arguably the *same* social construct, namely the Paralympic Movement. I would suggest this fails to complement a positivist approach to research.

In accordance with my ontological and epistemological understanding of knowledge, an *interpretative* approach to research will be utilised. With regard to my ontological assumptions of the nature of knowledge, I would agree that “there are multiple realities and that the mind plays a central role, via its determining categories, in shaping or constructing these.”(Sparkes, 1992:27). The possibility of multiple truths is highly contentious. Sparkes (1992) states: “in a world of multiple realities, multiple truths can exist” (p.36). This is perhaps explained in part by Sugden and Tomlinson (2002:18) asserting: “given that there are multiple vantage points, there are multiple truths”. Depending on the perspective from which an individual considers a topic or item of knowledge, will affect their understanding of a social construct and the reality or 'truth' of it in their opinion. Issues surrounding relativity will now be discussed.

### *Relative knowledge*

Arguably a discussion of the potential co-existence of more than one truth can inevitably lead to a perception that all knowledge is relative. In discussion of the concept of relativism, Guba (1990) states:

*Ontologically*, if there are always many interpretations that can be made of any inquiry, and if there is no foundational process by which the ultimate truth or falsity of these several constructions can be determined, there is no alternative but to take a position of *relativism*. Relativism is the key to openness and the continuing search for ever more informed and sophisticated constructions.(p.26; italics in original).

Yet, relativism is problematic as if all things are relative why are certain actions and values perceived as the norm. Is this because a majority of individuals within a certain group adhere to this belief? As such is this agreement desired for the greater good, or instead is this consent to a cause constructed by a relatively small number of social elites who wish to benefit from the particular social behaviour of lower class masses?

Relativism is a contested term and rarely seen as a meritocratic notion. Relativism constructs an arena where one idea can be relative to another, however while one assertion may be considered the norm, another relative idea/action may be labelled as abnormal, even 'undesirable'. If relativism was open to self-expression and the embracing of lots of different ideas would the perceived need to highlight deviancy and undesirable behaviours be necessary. To alienate a particular opinion or social action renders relativism a possible notion, but nonetheless a contested and complex concept.

### *Conclusion*

The reception of this research, as with most research, is at the mercy of the reader. However, it is hoped that ontological and epistemological differences of opinion will not be the main focus for those reading this research. The strength of this research project emanates from pooling ideas from different Paralympic sub-fields to generate critical discussion, from

which future relations and change may develop. The research design chosen and employed within this research project will now be discussed.

### Research Design

This research will utilise an interview method to explore the social perceptions of the Paralympic Movement as understood by members of the Paralympic field. Data was collected from individuals who have operated and/or continue to operate in the Paralympic field. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. The responses gathered via these interviews were 'coded' and analysed in accordance with a grounded theory approach (Morse and Richards, 2002). From the dataset, themes emerged and were then sociologically analysed and used to develop critical understandings of the Paralympic Movement. The research design will be discussed with explicit focus on sampling and the use of face-to-face and telephone interviews. Data analysis techniques employed and issues of research reliability and validity are also documented

### *Sampling*

The first methodological challenge for this research was to identify and secure a *sample* of individuals to interview. Fink (1995) defines: "a sample is a portion or a subset of a larger group called a population. The population is the universe to be sampled"(p.1) This research project sought to identify individuals who had operated and/ or still operated within the Paralympic field.

Data was collected from individuals who have operated and/ or continue to operate in the Paralympic field. These individuals possess some experience of the Paralympic Movement, and arguably a vested interest within it, creating a useable dataset. This sample can be seen to adhere to the assertion that; "there is a need to identify participants able to provide *appropriate levels of insight to the phenomena* being studied" (Amis, 2005:117; italics my emphasis). It is important to acknowledge the inability of this research to make wide-ranging assertions and generalisations. The results of this research could potentially be extrapolated to help articulate the

opinions and desires of some members of the Paralympic field. Research findings should *not* be presented as the thoughts and wishes of the general public, which include a diverse group of individuals some of which have had no or limited interaction with Paralympic sport. As such these people are unlikely to possess many, if any, views on what the Paralympic Movement is and should be.

Once the criteria for the sample group had been identified, i.e. individuals possessing experience of operating within the Paralympic Field; a list of desired interviewees was created. This research sought to identify individuals with the requisite knowledge through a *key informant technique* meaning: "individuals are chosen on the basis of specific knowledge that they possess, for example they may have a particular role or responsibility within an organisation."(Gratton and Jones, 2004:104).

The interviewee list included former and current Paralympians, retired and active disability sport administrators, social researchers of disability and disability sport as well as disability activists. Inevitably, this sample contains people with different levels of experience of Paralympic sport. Some disability activists may have only viewed the Paralympic Games via the media, compared to some individuals who have worked in disability sport administration for over twenty years. The Paralympians interviewed have also attended a varying number of Paralympic Games and possess specialised knowledge of their own sport (e.g. wheelchair basketball, athletics, etc.) but are perhaps unaware of issues within other Paralympic sports. Some interviewees had also moved between sub-fields in the Paralympic field. For example, a former Paralympian was now active in disability politics. Thus, membership of the Paralympic field could have involved moving between sub-fields, as individuals occupy different roles at different times of their lives. Despite these differences, I believe that this variability provides a greater wealth of knowledge, than merely focussing on one Paralympic sub-field (e.g. Media, IPC, etc.), while at the same time all interviewees share the commonality of having some knowledge of the Paralympic field.



Once the desired interview list had been finalised, interviewees were sought. Using the key informant technique (Gratton and Jones, 2004) helped identify arguably the key players within different areas of the Paralympic field but it was not always possible to arrange interviews with these individuals. Obstacles limiting key informant recruitment (discussed later) led to snowball sampling also being used. Snowball sampling means: “one respondent is located who fulfils the theoretical criteria, then that person helps to locate others through her or his social networks” (Warren, 2002:87). An interviewee's personal contacts, if divulged, allow other individuals to potentially be recruited for interview. Snowball sampling was a useful technique as some interviewees identified further credible interview candidates. However, when further interview candidates were not provided by interviewees there was a need to refer back to the original list of key informants to begin the snowball sampling process afresh.

Deciding when to cease qualitative data collection is open to interpretation. No 'gold standard' or significant number defines the 'correct' size for a sample to be used in social research. It has even been argued that an overly large qualitative dataset may actually be detrimental as: “If the number of subjects is too large, then it is not possible to make penetrating interpretations of the interviews” (Kvale, 1996:102). With an excessive number of interview subjects the researcher may be unable to critically analyse a particular theme that emerges. The researcher possibly becomes distracted and disillusioned by the copious number and variety of opinions, forced to provide a general ineffective overview of the dataset. Within research literature it is asserted that qualitative researchers should aim for “saturation” (Morse and Richards, 2002). This is a difficult concept to define and implement. Saturation is deemed to have been achieved when data collected “simply reaffirms what is already known” (Gibson and Brown, 2009:29). Indeed, with what level of confidence can a researcher say that they will *not learn anything new* if they continued collecting data beyond the point at which they stop?

Within this research project, it was deemed that after twenty interviews, and the collection of over twenty-one hours of interview responses, several themes had become apparent within the dataset. The researcher felt this facilitated the data collection to cease, so that the collected data could be adequately analysed and documented. The credibility of this decision, in part, arguably becomes justified by the utility of the data collected in facilitating the intended social exploration of the Paralympic field as well as interpretations of what constitutes reliable and valid research (discussed later).

To reiterate, the selection criteria for the chosen sample involved identifying and recruiting key informants (Gratton and Jones, 2004). At times this was achieved through snowball sampling (Warren, 2002). To be included in this sample an individual had to be a key informant, which in terms of this research meant they had previously been, or were currently a member of the Paralympic field. The interviewees therefore included individuals who had been or currently were members of one or more of the eight sub-fields that together generate the Paralympic field. Incidentally, it was not possible to recruit an individual from each of the eight sub-fields, an issue that is discussed later. The specific interviewee recruitment procedure utilised will now be outlined

#### *Interviewee recruitment procedure*

Each potential interviewee was contacted by e-mail. This e-mail briefly introduced the researcher and this research project. Each e-mail was differentiated to make the correspondence personal and relevant to the individual. Potential interviewees were invited to reply by e-mail regarding their willingness to be interviewed. When an individual replied positively, stating they would either like to know more about this research and/ or would be happy to take part in this study, another e-mail was sent. Subsequent correspondences suggested times and places for the interview to occur and included an outline of the discussion topics that I would like to discuss with them during interview. It was hoped that this list of discussion topics would

allow the interviewee the opportunity to gather their thoughts prior to entering the interview situation. Once a mutually convenient time and place for the interview had been agreed interviewees were sent an informed consent form<sup>32</sup> which was completed and returned prior to the interview being conducted. Interviews were then conducted.

### *Interview method*

The use of semi-structured interviews for data collection will now be critically analysed due to their inherent strengths and weaknesses. Comparisons between interviews and other research methods will illustrate why interviews were used and not alternative data collection methods.

Semi-structured interviews are often conducted using a list of interview questions which can be re-ordered and amended during interview to take account of interviewee responses and the possible emergence of unplanned topics for discussion (Gibson and Brown, 2009; May, 2002). The ability of the interviewer to alter the sequence of questions makes the semi-structured interview an adaptable and more useful tool for qualitative data composed of personal opinions (Gibson and Brown, 2009). When undertaking semi-structured interviews, Gibson and Brown (2009) state: “researchers try to fit their pre-defined interests into the unfolding topics being discussed, rather than forcing the interviewees to fit their ideas into the interviewer’s pre-defined question order”(p.88). In this research project, the question order would change to reflect the particular discussion topics being explored at any given time. It was anticipated the interview would flow more cohesively by doing this. For example, if an interviewee, early on in an interview started talking about a topic that the interviewer had intended to talk about later on in the interview, the interviewer would not constrain discussion by retaining a regimented question order.

Interviews included mostly open questions. Discussions were structured by having a list of planned discussion topics prior to beginning the interview. These focussed conversations on relevant Paralympic topics providing more efficient data collection than if the interviewee was asked to talk about their thoughts on the Paralympic Movement in an unstructured

way. The semi-structured style of interview still provided the opportunity to explore topics that may have been raised by interviewees during the course of interview.

Questions were differentiated and tailored to each individual to reflect their specific knowledge and experiences. Initially questions focussed on interviewees' personal experiences, before other specific topics were covered. Some key topics were explored with all interviewees, specifically: the purpose of Paralympic Movement and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the Paralympic Games. These core topics were supplemented with additional topics which varied depending on the individual. The advantages and limitations of semi-structured interviews will now be discussed.

#### *Critique of semi-structured interviews*

There are many advantages in using semi-structured interviews for this research. Semi-structured interviews allow social interaction with individuals thereby personalising the data collection process. An interviewer is more likely to access previously unknown and/ or hidden information using the trust and rapport hopefully developed during the interview process. Often before and after interviews there will be discussions perhaps about the research or unrelated topics. These conversations, although not recorded, set the interviewee at ease and hopefully improved their willingness to be open and honest with the interviewer and possibly to pass on others contact details to the researcher. Depersonalised generic surveys lack subtlety and the investigative sophistication provided by an effective semi-structured interview used to collect personal opinions.

Semi-structured interviews provide interviewees with the opportunity to express their opinions and attitudes in a receptive environment. Gratton and Jones (2004) suggest: "interviews enable participants to talk about *their own experiences in their own words*, and allow them to elaborate on any areas of particular interest or importance." (p.142; italics my emphasis). Surveys and questionnaires, often containing mainly closed questions, fail to provide this same freedom of expression and/or lack the sophistication to tease out

individual opinions that may differ from the assumptions of a preconceived question. It has been stated that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to: “explore topics that may emerge that were not included in the interview schedule” (Gibson and Brown, 2009:88). The ability of the researcher to ask further questions, based on the responses given by the interviewee, represents a clear advantage over, for example, the use of documentary research where the information is 'fixed' (Bryant, 2005; Scott,1990). During a semi-structured interview, the researcher has the ability to probe the interviewee (Gibson and Brown, 2009; May, 2002). Probing may seek to clarify a response to avoid misunderstanding and/ or encourage the interviewee to elaborate further on a comment (Gratton and Jones, 2004; May, 2002;).

Another advantage of semi-structured interviews is that a variety of question styles can be incorporated. This project employed mainly open questions to give interviewees space to elaborate and express themselves fully, more so than closed questions permit. During interview different types of questions were employed. For example, on occasions the interviewer sought to use, what has been termed the *challenge or devil's-advocate question* through which: “the fieldworker deliberately confronts the respondent with the arguments of opponents. The idea is to elicit rhetorical assertion and thus round out the respondent's position by forcing him [sic] to respond to challenge”(Strauss et al.,1969:71). With some interviewees, the 'hypothetical question' was employed to enrich an answer for those who it was felt were willing to give their own opinions but would feel threatened if they were overtly challenged (Strauss et al.,1969).

It is conceded that a semi-structured interview does, to some extent, provide a directed and selective approach to data collection, by asking certain questions and not others. This perhaps differs from, for example a researcher using a traditional oral history method to collect information about an individual's life, where the researcher merely listens. The only significant limits or influences placed on the subject being the time available to talk and the subject's own memory (Perks, 1995; Sommer and Quinlan, 2002).

There are of course some limitations which are attributed to semi-structured interviews. Yin (1994) argues: “interviews should always be considered *verbal reports* only. As such, they are subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation” (p.85; italics in original). Poor or inaccurate articulations by interviewees are an issue that semi-structured interviewers hope to overcome or minimise through clarifying and elaborative probes (May, 2002). If the interviewee’s assertions are inaccurate that, in itself, does not nullify the worth of those comments, even inaccurate perceptions provide an insight into how individuals become informed, and what people actually think about a social construct.

Interview bias is a perennial issue for all social researchers seeking to understand attitudes and opinions. However, the nod of a head or spoken word of acknowledgement that denote a comment has been received and understood, perhaps manifesting itself in the interview by the interviewer saying 'okay', both remain necessary and effective cues to assure the interviewee that what they are saying is of interest. Without such cues the flow of information from the interviewee may dry up, as they perceive the interviewer to be confused about or disinterested in what they, the interviewee, is saying. Inevitably, as the interviewer is heavily involved in the data collection process, with interpretations continually being made by interviewer and interviewee throughout the interview process, the aforementioned visual and/or verbal cues are arguably a necessary evil to maintaining effective communication.

I would argue that the advantages of this interview method outweigh its perceived limitations. Some criticisms are perhaps less attributable to the method *per se* and more a reflection of the overarching ontological and epistemological understandings of knowledge that exist throughout social research. Overall, the ability of the research method used to provide data with which to explore the aforementioned stated aim and objectives of this research project is the ultimate test of the research methods suitability for use in this study.

Arguably the most influential methodological issue encountered related to the locations in which interviews were conducted. Gibson and Brown (2009) suggest: “most of the decisions about where to conduct an interview are likely to be practical rather than analytic. Considerations may include convenience for the interviewee or interviewer, the appropriateness of the environment for recording the talk and, the level of privacy that the particular setting affords.”(p.97). In this research project, it became apparent that some interviewees could only viably be interviewed by telephone. The reasons for this ranged from the limited time some interviewees had available, the uncertainty over whether an interview would be cancelled at the last minute as well as the geographic location of some interviewees as some were based in Scotland, continental Europe, America and Australia. Although the use of telephone interviews was a pragmatic practical decision, it inevitably can be seen to have ramifications for the data collection process. In acknowledgement of this, it is important to compare the differences between face-to-face and telephone interviews.

#### *Face-to-face and telephone interviews*

Telephones, as effective devices for audible communication between two people, provide a workable platform through which to carry out semi-structured interviews. The perceived utility of telephone interviewing in conducting research has been documented (Gibson and Brown, 2009; Gillham, 2000; Gratton and Jones, 2004). Gillham (2000) suggests telephone interviewing represents: “an attempt to gain some of the qualities of face-to-face interviewing – in particular its flexibility and responsiveness – without the time and money costs of arranging physical meetings” (p.85). Issues of time and monetary outlay were a consideration for this research project. It appears self-evident to suggest, that telephone interviewing can mean economic costs are reduced, particularly when attempting to access individuals who live significant distances from the interviewer. The financial expense in travelling to continental Europe, North America and Australasia to carry out face-to-face interviews, perhaps lasting no longer than an hour, seemed unjustifiable. In addition, some interviewees sought to re-arrange and/ or cancel interviews

at short notice. Financial and logistical costs of re-arranging flights and accommodation because an interviewee has had to change the time/day of the interview could be avoided by using telephone interviews. As Warren (2002) outlines: “setting up the interview and actually making it happen are two different things...it is not uncommon for respondents to forget, simply not show up, or in other ways delay or prevent the actual completion of the interview” (p.90). Telephone interviewing allowed the researcher to easily adapt and react to changes in interviewees’ availability for interview.

The preference for telephone conversations, instead of face-to-face meetings, for prospective interviewees has been documented (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Some interviewees involved in this research also appeared to have preferred telephone meetings to face-to-face conversations. One reason for this, according to Gibson and Brown (2009), may be because telephone interviewing “may be more convenient for interviewees than face-to-face discourse” (p.94). This is particularly pertinent if the individual’s workplace is not conducive to carrying out an interview. For example, ideally interview settings will be quiet, free from distraction and prevent interviewees’ comments being easily listened in on by others which may make the interviewee feel self-conscious about their comments. For some interviewees a telephone conversation was arguably perceived to be more private, and conducive to talking about their opinions, than a face-to-face meeting at a public/ work-based arena.

Some disadvantages of using telephone interviews instead of face-to-face interviews potentially exist. Shuy (2002) states: “face-to-face interaction compels more small talk, politeness routines, joking, nonverbal communication, and asides in which people can more fully express their humanity”(p.541). This may allude to problems of generating rapport and trustworthiness between researcher and interviewee who never meet face-to-face. The procedures through which interviewees were contacted and interviewed arguably addressed this rapport issue. Prior to talking, e-mail messages had been passed between interviewer and interviewee. The efforts on both parts to arrange a mutually convenient time illustrate a level of trust



between both parties to make the effort and find the time to facilitate an interview. Furthermore, prior to the start of even telephone interviews, there would be some informal conversation, hopefully putting the interviewer at ease. Interview questions were tailored to interviewees making them more personable. These aforementioned facets of the interview process I would argue should assist in establishing and maintaining rapport with all interviewees

When using telephone interviews, Gillham (2000) suggests: “one practical support is to *send* interviewees a list of the main questions you want to ask...those being interviewed usually find it helpful (because structuring) to have something on paper in front of them so that they are not just relying on what is coming down the telephone”(p.86; italics in original). As previously mentioned *all* interviewees were sent a list of the discussion topics to allow them to gather their thoughts.

The most obvious difference between face-to-face and telephone interviewing is the absence of visual cues for both interviewee and interviewer during telephone interviews. It has been asserted that: “the absence of visual clues (sic) is central. In face-to-face interaction there are many visual signs to encourage respondents to elaborate, clarify, or amend what they say. These visual signs are not available by telephone.” (Shuy, 2002:543) However, during telephone interviews *verbal* cues can be used by the interviewer. Simple words/phrases such as 'okay', 'go on...', 'please tell me more about...', can be used to reassure the interviewee of the interviewer's continued attention and interest in what they are saying.

Some interviewees may have found the process of talking about their personal opinions and experiences of Paralympic sport easier to do through the *privacy* of the telephone where they cannot see the person they are talking to. During telephone interviews, if interviewees so wished, they could sit with their list of discussion topics in front of them and use it as an aide memoir. Furthermore, telephone interviewees are, more than likely, in locations that are familiar to them (e.g. their office or home) and therefore

perhaps willing to be more confident and open about their opinions and comments because they feel safe and relaxed in familiar surroundings.

Overall, I believe face-to-face and telephone interviews can be effectively used in partnership within the same research project. The process of transferring spoken comments into written documents ready for analysis will now be outlined.

#### *Recording interviewee comments*

All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder with the consent of interviewees. The mere act of recording a conversation will influence the comments made by an interviewee (Warren, 2002). Some interviewees, even those well accustomed to having their comments recorded, may impose self-censorship to prevent seemingly socially unacceptable comments being voiced; even though interviewees were assured their identities would remain hidden in this thesis.

Full verbatim transcription was undertaken from the recorded interviews. Spoken words that could be recognised were documented. No body language or changes in pitch were noted. It is conceded that these transcripts will not contain all the nuanced signifiers of meaning contained in spoken words (Gibson and Brown, 2009). However, it is the logic of argument utilised by the interviewee that fundamentally establishes meaning. These full verbatim transcriptions were used, not the audible recording, in the analysis process.

#### *Analysis*

Interview comments, once transcribed, were analysed using a form of grounded theory (Morse and Richards, 2002). Through a process of reading and re-reading, sentences/paragraphs from interview transcripts were 'coded' to form themes. These themes were then critically analysed by the researcher using Bourdieu's sociological concepts. It is important to define a 'code' in terms of a grounded theory approach. Miles and Huberman (1994) state: "*codes* are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are

usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs” (p.56; italics in original). The utility of a code is articulated in the statement that: “to *code* is to create a category that is used to describe a general feature of data; a category that pertains to a range of data examples. In this respect, a code draws attention to a *commonality* within a dataset.” (Gibson and Brown, 2009:130; italics in original). As such a code acts as a collective store for similar data, that when gathered together begins to form a cohesive argument. Codes can be pre-conceived before data collection and emerge from the dataset during analysis, namely *a priori codes* and *empirical codes* respectively (Gibson and Brown, 2009). In this research *a priori codes* were derived from the stated objectives of the research, while an empirical code emerged during analysis. The *a priori* codes used in this research were ‘purpose of Paralympic Games’, ‘impact of impairment on Paralympic sport’ and ‘potential future developments of Paralympic Movement’. The empirical code that emerged from the dataset was ‘the influence of the Olympic Movement on Paralympic sport’. A diagram demonstrating how themes were derived from the coded interview data can be seen in appendix C.

It is important to be aware of the subtlety, complexity and significant influence and utility of codes, as used within an analysis based on grounded theory. Morse and Richards (2002) state: “coding is linking rather than merely labelling...Coding takes you away from the data – 'up' from the data to more abstract ideas or categories. Coding will also take you 'down' from the idea to all the material you have linked it to, and down from any of those segments to the whole document”(p.115). Note however, as Morse and Richards (2002) warn: “once coded, the data can look different, as they are seen and heard through the category rather than the research event. This is both a great advantage and a danger...it (also) wrenches the data segments out of context, distancing you from the original whole” (p.115-6). Not all data collected will be coded into usable categories. Not all interviewees will contribute to each coded category due to the personalised nature of semi-structured interviews. As such, seemingly cohesive assertions emerging from

themes must be tempered and contextualised within the plethora of views and potentially contradictory opinions expressed during the research process.

### *Ethical research*

Guidance, for the appropriate ethical protocol for this research project, was sought via the University's Ethical Advisory Committee website (Loughborough University, 2010), with the appropriate ethical checklist completed. This research did not involve working with 'vulnerable populations', with the cohort of individuals interviewed being over eighteen years old and only possessing physical impairments, not intellectual impairments, therefore no third party (i.e. carer or legal guardian) needed to be present during interviews. Each participant was provided with an informed consent form prior to the interview taking place (see template in Appendix B), set out in which interviewees were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through their names being replaced by pseudonyms. Assuring confidentiality and anonymity to interviewees on occasions is problematic (Amis, 2005; Gibson and Brown, 2009). As Gibson and Brown (2009) suggest: "the ways that people speak, the topics that they discuss, the sorts of stories that they tell – all of these things can make the participants identifiable by other people (particularly in small samples or in tightly-knit communities)"(p.61). An anecdotal example of an encounter or event in which only a very small number of people were in attendance, or 'aware' of the event occurring, would by definition identify the interviewee who was re-telling the story. This was an issue that had to be overcome for an interviewee within this research (discussed later). Following the research project, interviewees were again contacted separately, protecting their identities, informing them of the findings of this research project.

The details of how, and why, this specific research design was employed for this research project have now been documented. However, before progressing to discuss the experience of implementing these research methods it remains necessary to consider how this research design, as previously outlined, stands up to questions relating to its methodological reliability and validity.

*Reliable and Valid Social Research*

The appropriateness of a research design is invariably judged using questions regarding the research's perceived reliability and validity. If a study is considered reliable then it is argued: "the same results would be obtained if the study were replicated" (Morse and Richards, 2002:168). Each interviewee was only interviewed *once* for this research project perhaps seemingly failing to prove it was reliable. However, is it really possible to re-conduct an interview, 're-test' an interviewee about their opinions of a particular social construct at a later date under the 'same conditions' i.e. using the same questions. The act of critical reflection, on the part of the interviewee, concerning their perceptions of the Paralympic Movement, may lead to a subsequent change in opinion either immediately following an interview or during the process of self-reflection on their interview responses at a later date. Through being exposed to different perspectives and issues during the course of the interview the seemingly test-retest reliability of the questions used to collect interviewees' responses to the 'same questions' about, arguably, the 'same topic' may seem low as opinions change and attitudes develop in light of previous and subsequent experiences, including the interview process. If interviewees replied differently when asked the same questions would this represent ambiguous questions, poor research design, inaccuracy and/or intentional misleading on the part of the interviewee, or a genuine change in opinion, as a consequence of self-reflection post-interview. The issue of reliability, and measuring it for semi-structured interviews used in social research, is thus a problematic issue. The concept of validity as applied to social research will now be outlined.

Validity emanates from the requirement that a researcher is actually investigating the topic/issue to which they purport to be studying. Morse and Richards (2002) state: "validity requires that the results accurately reflect the phenomenon studied" (p.168). As such, in this research project, do the questions asked by the researcher really explore the social perceptions of the Paralympic Movement. Furthermore, do the interview transcripts that will be used for data analysis accurately reflect the interviewee's perception(s) of the

Paralympic Movement. It has been suggested that for interviews; “validity is harder to ensure, given that transcriptions are a tool for interpreting the interview, rather than an analysis in themselves.”(Gratton and Jones, 2004:150). I would argue full verbatim transcripts do provide an accurate resource for understanding the perceptions of the Paralympic Movement as expressed by interviewees. Overall, inevitably the concepts of reliability and validity when applied to semi-structured interviews can be particularly difficult to prove. Again the concept of proof is based on certain ontological and epistemological assumptions about knowledge and therefore open to debate and differential definitions. It is however important to note that this researcher was sensitized to the need for valid and reliable interpretative social research and attempted to achieve this.

### *Summary*

This section has identified and explained the research design used within this research, in some detail. The use of semi-structured interviews, conducted either face-to-face or by telephone has been critically considered in reference to previous literature emanating from the study of research methods. This research design is a fusion of the researcher's ontological and epistemological understanding of knowledge *and* the perceived demands of exploring the topic of study. The experience of implementing the aforementioned research design will now be reflected upon.

### This Research Experience

#### *Reflexive research*

The upcoming discussion highlights this researcher's desire to be reflective and self-aware of this project. It has been asserted: “given that in qualitative interviews the researcher is the instrument, there is no escape from the self” (Roulston, 2010:127). The process of self-realisation and self-awareness of the researcher's involvement in the research process can be termed reflexivity which refers to: “the researcher's ability to be able to self-consciously refer to him or herself in relation to the production of knowledge about research topics” (Roulston, 2010:116). Hence, it is important to

appreciate the role of the researcher and their individual interactions during the research process. The most influential issues experienced by this researcher during the research process will now be discussed.

### *Negotiating the Sample*

Generating the desired sample size and constitution was a significant issue. Numerous individuals operating within the Paralympic field were contacted. However, this project was confronted by, what Adler and Adler (2002) suggest are, two types of reluctance relating to access and resistance. Access issues can stem from individuals being difficult to locate/contact and/or reticent about being involved as an interviewee (Adler and Adler, 2002). The issue of resistance is apparent when interviewees fail to disclose information or engage in discussion at certain points of the interview (Adler and Adler, 2002).

In this research, access issues were experienced making contact and gaining consent with potential interviewees. When utilising snowball sampling, the reliance on interviewees being gatekeepers to other interviewees was problematic. For example, once an interview was completed I would ask individuals if they were in contact with other potential interviewees. On several occasions interviewees stated that they were, however some individuals were reluctant to hand this person's contact details to me, instead offering to act as an intermediary by contacting the potential interviewee themselves. I endeavoured to avoid this situation, as each time an individual offered to liaise with another potential interviewee I failed to secure an interview with the third party. This arguably illustrates the need for a researcher to retain direct ownership and control over the data collection process. At the same time, there is a need to respect the wishes of the interviewee and as such if they are unwilling to hand over contact details this issue is not to be pursued to the detriment of the relationship with a current interviewee. The reluctance to provide an individual's contact details, without first gaining their permission, was also an issue when liaising with other researchers who are keen for their informants/subjects to not be exploited by other researchers. Even when interviewees did provide me with a third party's

contact details, there were occasions when potential interviewees either failed to respond at all or requested further information only to not reply to subsequent attempts to interview them. These dead-ends proved time-consuming and challenging; with fresh attempts having to be continually made to contact new individuals for interview to attempt to re-start the snowballing process.

One possible reason for the difficulty in securing interviews may emanate from using e-mail. Some interviewees were known to my supervisor, helping to personalise these interview requests. However, I did not have any previous interaction with the majority of individuals I contacted requesting interview. While e-mail correspondence is relatively cheap and quick to use, it still possesses limitations. E-mails containing interview requests may be deleted, without even being opened, or filtered out as spam. Intentionally the contact e-mail used was sent without any attachments, thereby reducing the perception that the e-mail being received from a previously unknown person was a virus. This however meant that the e-mail message had to contain sufficient information to inform the reader about the research and the data collection process. However, the e-mail could not go into extensive detail as arguably the reader would lose interest and/or be over faced by an overly long e-mail from an unknown sender requesting their help.

Another issue encountered with e-mail was that individual contact details were sometimes replaced with generic e-mail addresses through which e-mails would supposedly be redirected to the desired recipient. For example, the e-mail address 'info@Paralympic.org.uk' was the only possible contact route for some members of the BPA. I received no response to my enquiries and only attained interviews with individuals associated with the BPA through snowballing and chance<sup>33</sup>. I could not access some individuals without going through a generic gatekeeper where inevitably decisions were made about the appropriate course of action for each correspondence, perhaps even without the knowledge of the actual interviewee candidates who I wished to talk with. The effect of gatekeepers and barriers preventing access to potential interviewees is unquantifiable yet arguably significant.



While some individuals may be happy to express opinions, others may not be used to the practice of thinking critically, much less being asked to have their opinions recorded and used by, up until that point, someone who they had never met before. There is, I would argue, a significant difference between asking someone for information and asking for an individual's personal opinion. The delivery of information is likely to be a common, if not everyday activity, for many individuals within employment. However, the provision of your personal opinion is arguably a more intimate revealing of one's self and opens an individual to an experience in which, in many cases but admittedly not all, they are laying themselves open to questioning in an unfamiliar context and/or setting. As a social investigation into the Paralympic Movement, this research subsequently faced arguably different issues compared to, for example, attempting to recruit elite triple jumpers as part of a biomechanical investigation into efficient triple jump take off technique.

It became pertinent to appreciate that, when attempting to secure interviews: "visibility is not the same as accessibility" (Thomas, 1995:4). When seeking to contact individuals it was often possible to view an on-line picture and/or mini-biography to gain an insight into their current work. The contact details in the form of an e-mail address and/or office telephone number and postal address was directly *visible* from the webpage. However, when contacting these individuals there was no greater guarantee that they would reply, just because their picture and/or a mini-biography was in the public domain. As such, it is important for researchers not to get overly confident about their ability and available resources to access ever broader samples through the internet. At the same time the difficulties that still exist in making meaningful contact with potential interview subjects who *appear* easy to reach should be appreciated by those critiquing a piece of research.

Arguably individuals who are more visible, and as such exposed to public attention, may prove to be more difficult to attract as interviewees. For example, it may be argued that high-profile media professionals will be constrained in the time and inclination which they have to be part of social research into a topic they have a vested interest in and are already paid for

their involvement in. I contacted for interview several media professionals reporting on Paralympic sport without success. As such the media sub-field proved difficult to access as a social researcher. The only interviewee who could perhaps provide some comment on the media's perspective was a former Paralympian who had spent some time reporting at a previous Paralympic Games.

This research sought to access a range of sub-fields that exist in the Paralympic field. However access to all these sub-fields was not always forthcoming. Significantly, the IPC failed to grant access following multiple requests to talk with members of their organization as part of this research. My correspondence was passed between individuals at the IPC headquarters in Bonn before a decision was reached. This procedure has been described as giving the researcher the run-around (Argyris, 1969) and reveals the important role of gatekeepers in managing access to employees (Adler and Adler, 2002).

The potential reasons for restricted access to IPC staff are numerous. Yeager and Kram (1995) suggested organisations may be reluctant to allow access to outsiders: "because of their sense that such academic research would be simply judgemental or because they feared damaging disclosure of sensitive corporate activities and information"(p.46). Argyris (1969) states organisations may fear: "research may uncover material which might not be favourable to the organisation"(p.120). The IPC, like many corporate organisations, publishes news bulletins and press releases that portray a certain image of an organisation to the public. Contacting an organisation to ask them about issues, which they have already provided public statements on, presupposes that these statements are either lacking or even false. The public image and perceived ideologies and values of the IPC may be, it could be argued, potentially tarnished if it were revealed that the practical operations of the organisation do not live up to the publicly stated values of the IPC. The pressure to attract sports fans to *your* sport, and not another, coupled with media and sponsorship commitments and aspirations arguably

makes realism a mundane and unattractive image to portray for a sports organisation.

Whether individuals immersed in corporate organisations, such as IPC, are still 'open' to sociological research is open to debate (Bairner, 2009). Jarvie (2007) stated: "disparaging remarks are often made about academics and intellectuals as if they have no place in the public debate about sport" (p.412). The perceived illegitimacy of the sociologist of sport further entrenches the barriers that can restrict access to researching social constructs, as well as diminishing the reception and perceived value of their findings. In this regard, Vaugrand (2001) comments, "the difficult task for *critical theory of sport* is to have access to every potential source of data" (p.190; italics my emphasis). IPC has to consider whether its willingness to have direct input into research that creates debate actually destabilizes their position of authority within the Paralympic Movement as they do not have full control over, nor are aware of, what the results may be. As Argyris (1969) states: "the agents of the organization may decide to resist the research program because they perceive it as a possible attempt to destroy something already existing in the organization. For example, some research projects are resisted because they are *perceived as being designed to weaken a union.*" (Argyris, 1969:119, italics my emphasis). In a similar way, a discussion of the purpose(s) and a perceived SWOT analysis of the Paralympic Movement could be viewed with concern by IPC. It is IPC, via their stated vision and mission (see IPC 2010d) that arguably sets out what the development issues and potential future are for Paralympic sport. To make this a discussion point, it could be argued, risks diluting the will and commitment to the IPC's operations as perceived consensus gives way to possibly fractious debate.

This suspicion of the unknown reasons and benefits of partaking in sociological research for a dominant stakeholder is, to some extent, a challenge facing sociology of sport researchers more so than other sports scholars. The perceived performance benefits of being included in, and funding, research by sports psychologists, physiologists, etc. is arguably less contested as the benefits of these endeavours, i.e. improved athletic

performance, are arguably widely accepted and sought. However, as such what opportunities are there for a sociologist of sport undertaking social research in highly organised and tightly regulated elite sporting organisations.

While appreciating the need to critique and re-make social constructs as we see fit, just as previous generations have, it is important to see both the negative *and* positive attributes. To only report and become associated with negative criticism, all the time neither providing possible solutions (however imperfect themselves) nor acknowledging the positive aspects of a sporting social construct, is problematic. How is the sociologist of sport to gain access to a social organisation if they are perceived to be a fundamental force of opposition, out to discredit and *destructively* criticise a social construct. In regard to Olympic research, Lenskyj (2000) states: "it is difficult for a sport sociologist to develop a critique of the Olympic industry without appearing to be uninterested in, unmoved by, or opposed to any kind of sporting competition - a position that Olympic boosters routinely attempt to discredit with the label *naysayer*." (p.3; italics in original). Undoubtedly there needs to be a shift of opinion from both sociological researchers and social organisations, if the perceived distrust and destructive criticism of each opposing side is to be overcome (Bairner, 2009).

In light of a seemingly depressing and downtrodden account of the feasibility of sports-related sociological research, it is important to speculate why certain individuals consented to being interviewed for this project. Some research projects use financial incentives to attract interviewees, which have been considered both advantageous and also problematic (Adler and Adler, 2002; Yeager and Kram, 1995). No economic reward or compensation was offered to any interviewees involved in this project. Instead, interviewees benefitted from exploring their experiences and knowledge of the Paralympic Movement using a different lens, with the majority of interviewees not accustomed to thinking sociologically. Individual opinions were valued and supplemented by others' comments. By meeting with a social researcher, individuals could become aware of other opportunities for Paralympic sport and develop their own critical thinking, which can be applied across a range

of social situations; Paralympic and beyond. As interviewees were all part of the Paralympic field, they all have some power and influence over how Paralympic sport is perceived and manifested through their involvement. Once completed, interviewees received an outline of this project's findings with an opportunity to provide feedback on the research findings.

The importance of the researcher's own biography and social relations and their impact on the successful recruitment of certain interviewees should not be overlooked. Some interviewees recruited were already involved in other research projects. As such, they arguably possessed an appreciation for both the difficulty of accessing and securing interviewee candidates for research projects, as well as the worth of academic research.

Some interviewees were acquaintances known to my supervisor, thereby making my initial e-mail contact more personable. At the same time, including my supervisors contact details may have led other individuals who did not concur with the findings of my supervisor's research publications to reject my request. The impact of this possible deterrent is unknown and the assistance provided through my supervisor by being able to contact individuals whom I would have struggled to contact alone, certainly justifies including my supervisor's contact details on the e-mail correspondence<sup>34</sup>.

Several interviewees were either nearing retirement or had recently changed jobs. Some of these individuals had operated within privileged positions within the Paralympic field as either athletes or administrators. I would argue being in a period of occupational transition proved fortuitous. Firstly, for those who had retired from competitive sport and/or high level Paralympic sport administration there was perhaps a desire to pass on their knowledge and experiences of Paralympic sport to others, including a social researcher such as myself. Through involvement in this research, these individuals could revisit important Paralympic memories and perhaps felt they could still play a part in the development of Paralympic sport today. Secondly, by possessing the knowledge but not a contractual allegiance to, for example IPC, as may have been the case had these individuals still been 'employed'

by IPC; these individuals were arguably more likely to be willing to be included in this research.

The dataset also included current Paralympic athletes and disability sport administrators; who illustrate while problematic it is still possible to access individuals still involved in provision and development of Paralympic sport. Current administrators and athletes were beneficial in providing insights into the current state-of-play in disability sport and also articulating some future hopes and concerns for the Paralympic Movement. Having discussed factors experienced when recruiting subjects, I will now reflect on issues that arose during the interview process.

### *Interview process*

The process and practice of interviewing, opposed to a particular interview question, provided insights into the social perceptions of disability, Paralympic sport and society. My status as a sociologist, the use of full verbatim transcripts and the interview method itself were all influential in the interview process.

Firstly, the social perception of my status as a researcher in the sociology of sport was highlighted, in particular, by one interviewee. As an academic researcher, but not a sociologist, one interviewee commented, "I wouldn't think I'd want the sociologist to come too close to it [Paralympic Games] actually, but that's me, because they [sociologists] come along behind and put meaning on something after it's happened. Don't you, that's what you do". In response to this I asserted the fact that all individuals place a perceived, subjective value upon certain social actions, actors and constructs. Furthermore, I suggested to the interviewee it is arguably via commercially influenced promotion and media coverage of Paralympic sport that meanings are intentionally ascribed to social behaviour and structures. To state it is only sociologists who place social meaning on events and social constructs, at a later date, is an extremely selective, reified and reductive assertion of the everyday social interactions which we all experience and have an influence in. In spite of this interviewee's misgivings for the actions of sociologists, they were still willing to assist this research project.

The use of full verbatim transcripts was an issue for one interviewee. Firstly, the colloquial style of language as expressed in a full verbatim transcript concerned the interviewee. The sometimes haphazard and rambling verbal articulation of emerging ideas within an interview setting, when viewed in the form of a written document, seemingly breaks the grammatical and stylistic rules of well written English. As such it can be, as was the case for this interviewee, an unusual experience for the reader to read their verbal comments in written form. The ability of the full verbatim interview transcript to contain the interviewee's interview comments in a fixed state (i.e. as a document) which can then be used for subsequent sociological analysis justifies, in my opinion, use of this technique.

Secondly, upon reading the transcript the interviewee remarked, that although their name would remain anonymous they felt their identity would be revealed by some of the insightful accounts provided by them. Some of the events reported by the interviewee occurred with only a few people present thereby narrowing down the possibilities of whom had made the remarks. This illustrates the tensions for interviewers to offer anonymity and then their ability to facilitate this (Amis, 2005; Gibson and Brown, 2009). In recognition of these concerns, interviewer and interviewee liaised to confirm which comments the interviewee was happy to be made public. The interview method will now be reflected upon.

Overall, I believe semi-structured interviews proved conducive to effective exploration of the social perceptions of the Paralympic Movement. Asking individuals about their personal experiences, before then moving onto other topics which I wished to explore, was particularly useful. This ordering of questions/topics set the interviewee at ease and got them talking about a topic they were most confident with and had the most knowledge of, i.e. their life experiences. Some key topics were explored with all interviewees namely questions about the purposes, and a possible SWOT analysis, of the Paralympic Movement. These core topics were supplemented with additional pre-planned topics which varied depending on the individual being interviewed. For example, when interviewing a wheelchair basketball player,

relevant issues including the team classification score of 14.0<sup>35</sup> and the involvement of able-bodied players at a national level were explored. The ability to tailor the interview to the individual being interviewed and getting the interviewee to critically think about topics in a way that they had perhaps not previously done before was extremely useful.

Providing a list of the relevant upcoming discussion topics, hoping to be explored in the interview, to interviewees some time prior to conducting the interview had variable utility. It was hoped providing interviewees with an outline of discussion topics would give them an opportunity to gather their thoughts before being in the interview setting. During some interviews, some interviewees still had difficulty talking about some topics as if they were thinking about them for the very first time. As such, they had perhaps not taken the time to look through the list of discussion topics. Other interviewees chose to make notes to prompt them of issues and events they wanted to make sure they told me about. These notes then acted as an aide memoir for the interviewee during the course of the interview and allowed topics to be explored with more critical thinking. For example, some interviewees confidently demonstrated an appreciation of several contrasting views and employed selective reasoning and logic to understand a particular issue. Overall, providing interviewees with a list of topics prior to the interview I feel was a worthwhile action, in spite of a few interviewees seemingly failing to consult these prior to interview. Throughout the interviewee cohort as a whole there was variability regarding the perceived level of confidence and ability individuals had to articulate personal opinion and thoughts about social issues within Paralympic sport. There were limited, matter-of-fact opinions expressed by an exercise physiologist who worked within Paralympic sport and a Paralympic wheelchair basketball player. At the other end of this continuum were individuals who could make logical arguments based on their opinions of the social perceptions of Paralympic sport. This latter cohort included those individuals well practiced in articulating their views verbally and providing persuasive argument; mainly individuals experienced in disability politics and social research projects into disability sport. The impact



of conducting some interviews face-to-face and others via telephone for data collection will now be reflected on.

The different characteristics of face-to-face and telephone interviews assisted these personalised interviews in different ways. During face-to-face interviews eye contact was maintained and non-verbal cues could be used to assure the interviewee of the interest of the interviewer (e.g. nodding of head). To ensure the interviews were personable there was a need to maintain eye-contact and not be looking at the question sheet for more than a couple of seconds while listening to a response. This was important to assure the interviewee that what they were talking about was of interest and also not to make them feel self-conscious and uncomfortable about the delivery of their responses in the interview setting. For the majority of interviewees, I felt it important to only glance at the question sheet, to act as a prompt when wanting to ask a question, to make the discussion seem less like a de-personalised question-answer process.

During telephone interviews, the researcher could pay closer attention to ensuring each pre-defined interview topic was covered. This was particularly useful during interviews in which the discussion topics were covered in a significantly different order than originally planned. More written notes could be made and additional questions written down without distracting the interviewee.

Telephone interviews at times also served to mask my physicality. However, both before and during telephone interviews my physicality could easily become apparent. Throughout this research I have perceived my physicality to have played a role in my thoughts and analysis both prior to, during and following the interview process. The articulation of embodiment and physicality will now be discussed in light of my experiences during this research.

### *Embodied interview process*

I currently do not possess a specific impairment that would cause me to identify as being 'disabled'. At times during the process of gathering data, I

would acknowledge that my identity as an able-bodied person became a possible area of tension.

Some of the individuals interviewed as part of this research were themselves current advocates of disability rights and/or operating within disability politics. During several interviews it transpired that some individuals attributed their termination in competing in elite disability sport due to the involvement and impact of able-bodied people in the administration of elite disability sport. For some interviewees their participation in Paralympic sport, which was being run almost exclusively by able-bodied administrators and coaches, conflicted with their growing understanding about the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990) and subsequent concerns for able-bodied domination and exploitation of impaired bodies.

When first making contact with former Paralympian Teresa, I received an e-mail response stating: "I am happy to be involved but would like to know what your personal interest in [sic] doing work on the Paralympics - are you a disabled person, ex-Paralympic athlete". Does this response assume that only a disabled person or ex-Paralympic athletes *would* be interested in researching the social perceptions of the Paralympic Games? I would argue the same question of personal motive, and a desire to learn of an individual's physicality and their relation to the field of research, *may* be asked of a social researcher but is unlikely to be asked of other sport scientists e.g. biomechanists, physiologists, etc.

While interviewing Teresa via telephone, I also experienced the issue of 'disability correctness' (Shakespeare, 2006). During the course of our interview, I asked Teresa "Do you feel Paralympic athletes can be lifestyle role models for *individuals with a disability* who are not currently in sport?" which she responded to. However, later on in the interview I asked: "do you feel the Paralympic Games should only be organised by *individuals with disabilities*?" to which Teresa replied "Well I don't know what you mean about people or individuals with disabilities, because I don't really understand that language. Do you mean 'disabled people', because 'people with disabilities' doesn't make sense to me really, if you think about the social model of

disability” Although a degree of rapport (it was perceived) had been established between interviewer and interviewee, with this question being asked forty-one minutes into a one hour seven minute long discussion, Teresa still felt it necessary to highlight the need to use *appropriate* language, even though we were both familiar with the subject matter. Thus the importance of the language used to define terms while discussing the social perceptions of disability was apparent at this juncture. The tension between being an able-bodied researcher exploring the social topics of disability sport resurfaced with another interviewee.

When interviewing Sam, another former Paralympian via telephone it became evident that involving able-bodied individuals with academic qualifications in disability sport was a key issue for this interviewee. This became apparent when Sam was talking about the employment of an able-bodied person, instead of a disabled candidate for a disability sport administration role. The decision was perceived as wrong as the life experience of disability, in Sam’s opinion, represented a 'qualification' for employment in disability sport, more so than any academic degree. As an able-bodied academic researcher I did question myself as to how the interviewee perceived me; was I not the type of person that they adamantly disliked being involved in Paralympic sport? However, during our correspondence Sam was extremely helpful, providing useful contact details for other possible interviewees. Sam never reacted negatively towards me as an able-bodied individual researching disability sport. Was it possible that my embodiment was masked by the telephone interview and it was assumed that I possessed an impairment? Or was there a wish for the interviewee to educate the interviewer about the perceived issues confronting their experiences in disability sport administration? Perhaps, by asking about the *social* issues surrounding Paralympic sport, I demonstrated to Sam an understanding of disability and sport, which to him acted as a passport of credibility for involvement in disability sport research. My able-bodied status was perhaps overlooked because Sam perceived me as *supporting* the need

to investigate and consider changes to the Paralympic Movement, thus meaning I was an acceptable 'honorary' member of the disability community.

The common thread of membership of the Paralympic field bound interviewees together. The multiplicity of experience and opinions that these individuals brought, I would argue, created a provocative and useful dataset with which to analyse the Paralympic field. The constitution of the dataset will now be briefly outlined before the subsequent discussions, facilitated by this dataset, are explored.

### **The Dataset**

The dataset analysed was composed of twenty semi-structured interviews which consisted of, in total, twenty-one hours sixteen minutes of conversation. Interview duration ranged from, the shortest which was twenty-seven minutes, up to the longest which lasted one hour fifty minutes. Interviewees<sup>36</sup> were between two and forty years older than myself. At the time of interview I was twenty-four years old. All interviewees were white. Of the twenty individuals interviewed four were from North America, fifteen British and one Australian. Eight interview subjects were able-bodied, while the other twelve possessed some form of physical impairment. The findings and subsequent analysis of this dataset will now be discussed.

## **Findings and Discussion - Purpose(s) of the Paralympic Games**

The twenty-one hours and sixteen minutes of conversation held with interviewees, when transcribed verbatim, yielded a rich, qualitative dataset with which to address the aim and objectives of this research project. Data was analysed using the three a priori codes, devised before data collection, and one empirical code, devised during data analysis (see chapter 5). This process led to four coherent themes being developed<sup>37</sup>. These themes are: the purpose(s) of the Paralympic Games, the suitability of impaired bodies as vehicles for elite disability sport, the impact of the IOC sub-field and the potential future developments of the Paralympic Movement. Each of these themes will be explored in turn. The first of the four themes will now be discussed.

The perceived purpose of the Paralympic Games has a fundamental influence upon how the Paralympic field is configured and interacts with broader society. It is important to consider what is at stake, and what stakes are being competed for, if fields are to be better understood (Bourdieu, 1978). During the interview process, it became apparent that the perceived intended purpose of the Paralympic Games is highly contested.

### **Rehabilitation**

It has previously been asserted that the initial *raison d'être* of Paralympic sport revolved around rehabilitation (Anderson, 2003; Guttman, 1976). The prominence of the rehabilitative sub-field, and its possible synonymity with the Paralympic field as a whole, was apparent when talking with some members of the Paralympic field. The relevance of seeing disability sport as a means of rehabilitation became apparent when discussing with a former Paralympic medallist, Paul, about how he became involved in the sport of wheelchair racing:

I had a spinal injury in 1977 and in the rehabilitation from that there is an element of sport in it...when you go home you go into a kind of vacuum of nothing happening, just a life you're

trying to cope with, with a lot of difficulty...I'd always been a football player, rugby player, sporty sort of person...I've been on a sport drug all my life really...I guess my involvement [with disability sport] started with just wanting to do it and wanting to compete and get back to sport...I feel it's just part of my personality, it's the human condition to try and go faster and do things better and so that [wheelchair racing] was one way I could do that.

Here, Paul, is expressing his 'sporting' habitus and desire to accumulate the rewards (capital) that can be accrued from the Paralympic field. This sporting capital is arguably accrued in two stages. Firstly, through entry into the field via the rehabilitative sub-field, following his spinal injury, social capital is gained from inter-personal relations being initiated and maintained through sport. This social capital is desired to fill, as Paul suggested earlier, an apparent social 'vacuum'. Secondly, through involvement in the Paralympic field, Paul *profited* from the cultural, and arguably symbolic, capital that came from him winning gold at the 1988 Paralympic Games. The cultural capital stems from representing one's country as part of the British 1988 Paralympic team. Meanwhile, the prestige and status of winning a gold medal at an international sporting competition, claiming to be parallel to the Olympic Games, arguably yields symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1997).

The *historical* importance of Paralympic sport as a tool for rehabilitating individuals who had acquired impairments, was voiced by some interviewees. A former Paralympic wheelchair tennis player, Jack, commented:

I think its changing. I think when the first Paralympics came in it was about...people out of hospital beds into chairs using sport as a form of rehab, and then in the [19]80s and [19]90s it changed from being a participation into actually these are athletes, and I think it's changing, it's evolved at every Paralympic Games I've been to, it's got more professional.

This historical account of the changing purpose of the Paralympic Games results from knowledge, and individual experiences, created within the Paralympic field. These individuals, like others interacting within the Paralympic field, gather information which they interpret, store and use within

their habitus to classify and judge the sporting achievements at the Paralympic Games (Bourdieu, 1984). This embodiment of Paralympic knowledge incorporates within it certain perceived structural frameworks which are then used in the perception and subsequent reactions to future interactions with sport, both disabled and able-bodied. Hence Jack chooses to interpret the current manifestation of Paralympic sport, when compared to their understanding of former Paralympic Games, as now being less focussed on rehabilitation and hence distanced, to some extent, from the rehabilitative sub-field.

The appraisals provided by some interviewees of Paralympic sport, may seemingly suggest that the image of the Paralympic Movement as a rehabilitative tool to discipline and cure impaired bodies, is out-dated and has been superseded with an alternative sporting image focussed on high performance. In anticipation of upcoming discussions, this may be the case. However, it should not be overlooked that even today the Paralympic Games may still be viewed, by some, as primarily a rehabilitative tool. Donald, an able-bodied social researcher of Paralympic sport actively involved in the administration of Paralympic sport through his work with a national Paralympic committee, commented: “from being at the Paralympic Games, and some of the comments made by people, I think some people still think its very much about rehabilitation, so because of that it's not necessarily seen as elite sport”. Here, Donald interestingly raises the issue that through ascribing the Paralympic Games with the label of rehabilitative, it then fails to identify as being an elite sporting event. As such Paralympic athletes would fail to access and accumulate the symbolic capital that stems from being perceived as an elite sporting performer. Thus, Paralympians’ identities are perceived to stem from being subjects of the rehabilitative sub-field, not primarily as athletes operating exclusively at the core of the Paralympic field. However, it remains possible for the same Paralympic Games to be perceived to possess different purposes at the same time, as individuals have different habitus and occupy different positions within or outside of the Paralympic field. This freedom to interpret for oneself, while at the same time being constrained to



choose from certain choices, represents the structuring and structured nature of social existence as articulated through Bourdieu's use of habitus. (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Discussion of whether the Paralympic Games can be viewed as merely an opportunity to participate in sport or as a credible elite sports competition will now be outlined.

### Participation or Elite

Some interviewees debated whether the Paralympic Games today was motivated by a desire to provide participation opportunities for impaired bodies, or a thirst to stage an exclusive, elite sporting event. When discussing the manifestation of Paralympic sport Connor, an able-bodied former Paralympic sport administrator, stated:

one of the basic philosophies which I always held as [position in IPC sport] was that as far as it was possible, as long as they could fulfil that minimum requirement of having enough athletes to produce a competition, all of the groups involved in Paralympic athletics should be at the Paralympics.

This could be viewed as an overly inclusive rhetoric and impractical philosophy to implement when creating an international sporting competition which lasts less than two weeks. While access for all may be viewed as an important philosophy for increasing grassroots participation, it appears incompatible with the staging of an elite sporting competition. This issue was highlighted by some interviewees, for example Jack outlines:

For me I think Paralympic sport is at a crossroads at this moment in time...a crossroads between wanting to appear as elite athletes and the best of the best and still this crossover, between participation and performance, where it's still about; I want to be recognised as the best of the very best, within my own division.

The ring fencing of particular groups of athletes through classification, twinned with rhetoric akin to a 'sport for all' model of sporting provision, arguably has the potential of negating the exchange of cultural capital, gathered from competing as part of a national Paralympic team, into the

prestige and status attributed to being a legitimate model of athletic excellence.

### ELITE disability SPORT

For some interviewees, the purpose of the Paralympic Games was seemingly self-evident and in accordance with the IPC's assertion that the Paralympic Games consists of "*elite sport* events for athletes with a disability" (IPC, 2010a; italics my emphasis). Daniel, a four-time Paralympic track athlete with cerebral palsy who is now a social researcher stated: "It's [Paralympic Games] an outlet for high performance sport, for wonderful achievements. For a one legged man who jumps higher than a two legged female, for example. It should be about those sorts of things." Hence, the purpose of the Paralympic Games is arguably to exhibit the sporting performances of impaired athletes. Edward, a two-time Paralympic 7-side-footballer who has cerebral palsy, comments: "a primary aspect [for the Paralympic Games] is to show and recognise and be a platform for people with disabilities to be involved in sports as legitimate athletes competing to the highest level, on an even playing field."

The importance of sporting achievements on show at the Paralympic Games, for Daniel and Edward means in their opinion it is the sporting performances of Paralympians which should give meaning to the Paralympic Games, opposed to the use of the Paralympic Games as a tool to serve other purposes, for example raising awareness of social issues experienced by disabled people. If the Paralympic Games is to be seen as an elite sporting event, Jack comments on the need for the media to frame coverage of the Paralympic Games as sports stories rather than personal interest stories:

it's about the media not just making it an interest story; someone has fallen off their horse and 10 years later they're riding for GB, its about this person is a sports person who happens to ride a horse and their doing this in their horasing career. Its about making sure if there are [Paralympic] sport stories they are included in sports pages and not in the general interest or 'isn't it nice you're doing something' kind of attitude.

The technique of framing a media article about a Paralympian's sporting prowess as an interest, rather than sports, story is one example of how the media sub-field plays a significant role in shaping the perceived purpose of the Paralympic Games (Schantz and Gilbert, 2001; Schell and Rodriguez, 2001). The media sub-field's influence on how an individual's habitus is developed and then analyses Paralympians within the Paralympic field should not be under-estimated.

During interviews, the belief that the purpose of the Paralympic Games is to stage and promote elite athletic performances by athletes with a disability, was often expressed when the interviewer suggested that the Paralympic Games could perhaps be used to address the social issues faced by disabled people. When talking with Dennis, an able-bodied former administrator of cerebral palsy sport, his opposition to the use of the Paralympic Games as a tool for exploring the social issues surrounding disability was especially directed toward the work of sociologists<sup>38</sup> in the Paralympic field:

*Dennis:* The purpose of the Paralympic Games is to give those people with a movement impairment profile the opportunity to aspire and perform at an elite level which is in parallel, if not equivalent to the mainstream Olympics.

*Interviewer:* Do you think it's [Paralympic Games] more than just an elite sports competition. Do you think it's, for example, a useful arena to articulate and discuss social issues?

*Dennis:* No, I wouldn't think I'd want the sociologist to come too close to it [Paralympic Games] actually, but that's me, because they [sociologists] come along behind and put meaning on something after it's happened. Don't you, that's what you do.

Here Dennis is expressing apparent concern for a sporting event to be used as a tool to analyse how disability and disability sport is perceived by society. Dennis also ignores that social meaning and value judgements, stemming from an individual's habitus, is not the sole preserve and task of sociologists but in fact a human constant as we all function as social beings each interpreting our social world and the social constructs within them, including

the Paralympic Games (Bourdieu, 1984). During the interview with Daniel, he too expressed a desire for the sporting achievements on show at the Paralympic Movement to be the primary focus:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel the Paralympic Games is an appropriate and important stage on which to discuss social issues that individuals with an impairment face

*Daniel:* No I don't because it should be about the sport and it should be about imperfect bodies showing how well they can engage in sporting practices and that's the tensions that exists between disability scholars and myself and scholars of disability sport, so the likes of [disability rights scholar] for example, would argue the Paralympic Games should be a platform for these sorts of discussions, but I don't believe they should...if it [Paralympic Games] is going to be about the sport and sport is all that matters, you can't have it as a vehicle, it can't be everything to the movement, it can't be everything to disabled people.

Hence, the specificity of capital (Bourdieu, 1997) is being emphasised by Daniel. In his opinion, the Paralympic field cannot serve a variety of purposes successfully. By attempting to, the Paralympic Games seemingly risks becoming contradictory and potentially confusing. In discussion with Jerry, a current British Wheelchair basketball player and winner of a bronze medal as part of the British Men's Wheelchair basketball team at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games, he too stated his desire for the Paralympic Games to be seen as a stage on which top level *athletes* with a disability are the focus, not the social issues faced by disabled people:

*Interviewer:* In your opinion what is the purpose of the Paralympic Games?

*Jerry:* It's for the elite disabled athletes to put on a sporting event and see who is the best in the world.

*Interviewer:* Do you think the Paralympic Games is an appropriate and important stage on which the social issues faced by individuals with impairments should be raised, for example the need for more accessible environments?

*Jerry:* In my opinion no, in my opinion it's a sporting event, we do get asked questions about disability rights out there [at Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games] and we just don't comment on them. That's not what we're there for. We're competing in elite sport to find out which team is the best in the world.

*Interviewer:* In one sense, getting back to the issue of media coverage, do you think that is an issue; that the Paralympic Games is trying to market itself as an elite sports event?

*Jerry:* I think certainly since Beijing [2008 Paralympic Games] what [media] coverage we saw it was about the sport and not about anything else, so hopefully going into London [2012] it will be all about sport

This response may be symptomatic of an athlete who does not want to risk their cultural capital as a Paralympian being ideologically hijacked, and or devalued, by competing interpretations of the *value* of the social, cultural and symbolic capital derived from competing at the Paralympic Games. The importance of being recognised as an athlete was also apparent when talking with Michelle, an individual with cerebral palsy who competed as a swimmer at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic games:

*Interviewer:* As an athlete, say for argument sake, if you won a medal and you were being interviewed by the media. What questions would you envisage or hope they asked you? Do you hope they would ask you about the...

*Michelle:* the sport...I think as an athlete you want to be recognised as an athlete for that purpose and I think people might still be open, if you're talking accessibility issues or whatever, but I think probably first and foremost you want your identity, subjectivity to be recognised as an athlete for your athletic pursuits.

However, appreciating the potential for the Paralympic games to provide other uses, Michelle who is currently undertaking social research into Paralympic Sport, went on to state that:

I think from an athlete's perspective it [Paralympic Games] is first and foremost a sport event competition. But that said I do think it does possess the potential [to discuss social issues]...am

I just trying to see possibilities that I want to see, you know, you want it to change attitudes, perceptions of disability.

Michelle's difference in opinion, when compared to Jerry, is perhaps partly a result of her movement through the Paralympic field. The importance of her status as a former, rather than current, Paralympic athlete is pertinent and influential in this regard. Michelle's habitus represents a culmination of many experiences of Paralympic sport as an athlete, volunteer and social researcher (Bourdieu, 1984). It is perhaps through occupying these different positions within the Paralympic field that Michelle is able and/ or wants to view the potential for the Paralympic Games to be used for more than just sporting purposes, compared to, for example, a current athlete. Differences in opinion emphasise the importance of individual habitus and remind social researchers to refrain from generalised assertions which fail to appreciate the capacity for differential individual interpretation and a multiplicity of habitus existing within the same field (Bourdieu, 1998a).

#### Elite DISABILITY sport

Many members of the Paralympic field emphasised the importance of disability in their experiences of Paralympic sport. The Paralympic Games was seen by many as more than sport, it was *disability* sport.

Social perceptions of disability influenced individuals' experiences of Paralympic sport. For some, the purpose of the Paralympic Games was to show impaired bodies producing sporting performances which can be interpreted differently to athletic performances achieved by able-bodied athletes. This perceived difference between able-bodied and disabled sport was identified by several interviewees as a key reason for being involved in Paralympic sport. Donald commented:

People ask why, why am I researching disability sport. Why not American football or something like that. I mean these guys [Paralympians] they're not there to set themselves up financially for the rest of their life. But the passion they have. They're passionate even if they don't get seen as achieving an elite result, they're still brilliant athletes. I like that against all odds approach, it's what attracted me to the sport and I think that's what helps get other people involved.

Thus in this instance, the relative lack of economic capital available to Paralympians, compared to some able-bodied sportsmen/women, is not deemed to be devaluing or detrimental to enjoying the sporting performances generated within the Paralympic field. Indeed, it may be argued that for some observers, these less economically valued performances actually represent a purer style of sporting performance. Some may perceive that monetary rewards (economic capital) have not been permitted to taint and corrupt the sporting performances on show at the Paralympic Games. As such, Paralympian's performances could be perceived as the legitimate example of sporting endeavour; not seeking to perform for selfish financial conquest, but for the emotional passion of sporting competition.

Some individuals cited emotion as a key reason for interacting with Paralympic sport. Barry, an able-bodied former athletics coach and administrator in Blind sport, commented:

there is another appeal to Paralympic sport which is really quite moving and uplifting and that is the spectacle of people struggling with impairment to perform as performers, as athletes. That can be quite moving. It's a bigger emotional charge I think than you get in the Olympic Games.

Hence there appears to be some significant, intangible, emotional appeal toward Paralympic sport based on the overt presence of impairment. Predominantly, thinking about athletics, there are faster or greater 'sporting' performances, in terms of world record times and distances, for events at the Olympic Games compared to the Paralympic Games<sup>39</sup>. Yet Barry and others revealed that the performances achieved at the Paralympic Games are perceived by some as more enjoyable, arguably pointing to the perceived added value attributed to watching individuals possessing an impairment perform sport. The presence of an impairment provides another aspect to Paralympians' performances for these spectators. It is argued that this emotive draw to Paralympic sport, focused on impairment, is soon superseded by an appreciation of the sporting performances in their own

right. Trevor, an able-bodied administrator of Paralympic sport who is actively involved in preparations for London 2012 Paralympic Games, states:

Most people who see Paralympic sport for the first time do so from an emotional angle. But then overtime they start to lose sight of the disability and start to see sport in its own right, and I've taken hundreds of people into that situation over many years and seen that happen to them.

For some individuals this sporting, opposed to explicit corporeal, focus is deemed a more appropriate and desirable form of sporting spectatorship. This is because the focus on impaired bodies can be perceived as distasteful and patronising as a Paralympian's physicality, not their achievements, are centre of attention. Jack, talking about media coverage of Paralympic athletes that focuses on their impairment, states: "If you've got a disability that's part of your life, and I do find the media slightly patronising and condescending to some of the athletes". The perceived patronising of Paralympic athletes by the media was also highlighted by Nathan, who acquired a spinal cord injury and is currently an academic social researcher investigating disability and disability theory, who stated:

I often feel the Paralympics is shown as 'after the lord mayor show'. This will sound crude, but occasionally when I read some of the media and listen to people talking about it they're almost discussing it in a way that they would discuss a poodle walking on its hind legs.

Here Nathan is expressing how the Paralympic Games can be viewed as a source of novel entertainment based on differences in physicality; a sporting circus full of curious bodies (Gilbert and Schantz, 2008). This image of the Paralympic Games may provide economic capital, but lacks respect for impaired bodies, nullify the capability of impaired athletes to convert their cultural capital as a Paralympian into the legitimated symbolic capital afforded to other elite sporting performers. The media sub-field's focus on physicality, rather than sport was evident to Abigail, a former wheelchair basketball player at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic games, who stated:



I can remember the first sort of press releases and stuff I had done. They were so patronising. It was brave [name of athlete] does this and that, and you're like 'no!' It was all about that kind of sob story and I'm like 'no, I don't want that, I'm playing a sport and I'm training hard, that's the message'.

While expressing this desire for people to ignore her impairment, Abigail later stated somewhat contradictorily that:

I think people need to see it's not straight forward. It's not as easy as being an able-bodied athlete, because you've got all sorts of things to take into account...you want people to have an understanding of the disability but you want people to see the sport first.

Hence, Abigail perceives it is important that recognition of impairment *and* sporting achievement is achieved, to some extent in the Paralympic field. The variable importance of talking about impairment in the context of an individual's sporting achievements was discussed when considering potential differences between congenital and acquired impairments. In this regard, Patrick, a single leg amputee administrator of sport for individuals with cerebral palsy, states:

when people have an accident, some people, for whatever reason, just fade away, don't do anything. For people who are born with that disability they know nothing else. For me prior to my accident I could run, I could jump, I could play football, that was my life. Now for people who have congenital [impairment(s)], that is their life. They don't adjust in terms of somebody who has had an accident, somebody who has got to learn to walk again, somebody who may well be in a chair, may be paralysed. So it's a massive, massive shift change. Not saying it's any easier at all, but it's a massive shift change.

Here, Patrick highlights how the perceived necessity and ability to overcome disability through Paralympic sport may be an important factor in defining the different purposes which people hope the Paralympic Games will fulfil. For some individuals with an acquired impairment the Paralympic Games may be perceived as inspiration to 'overcome' their impairment. Other individuals with congenital impairments may perceive the assertion that impairment is something that needs to be 'overcome' as facile and condescending.

Individuals with congenital impairments may feel they are not 'overcoming' but merely living their life in accordance with the opportunities and constraints afforded to them by nature and nurture, like all living organisms.

### Overcoming

The desire to highlight Paralympians as exhibiting a form of overcoming is a contentious issue within the Paralympic field. Through emphasising apparent overcoming on the part of Paralympians, some may argue there is a risk of promoting the belief that anyone can overcome barriers if they apply sufficient effort (Berger, 2004; Thomson and Darcy, 2008). Trevor suggested:

the purpose of the Paralympic Games goes beyond sport itself because it demonstrates not just to disabled people, but that regardless of what challenges you have in life, it is possible, because you're a human being, to actually try and drag yourself up and get yourself to be better than you are.

Hence, for some the Paralympic Games may be considered evidence that effort conquers all, for both able-bodied and disabled people.

Specifically relating to impaired bodies and the Paralympic field, there is a fear among some that the image of the 'super-crip' is a result of, and perpetuated by, an emphasis on overcoming (Berger, 2004; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). However, is emphasis on overcoming problematic and creating the super-crip image or is the *excessive* emphasis on overcoming the problem. This issue was discussed with Daniel:

*Interviewer:* In your opinion, are Paralympians framed by the media as sportsmen and women or as people overcoming a disability?

*Daniel:* I think unfortunately they fall into the latter category so that, the ideas of Berger [2004] etcetera and the 'supercrip' are quite evident in the representation of these athletes, but maybe that is just part of the story. So, one of the issues that is always brought up when [Brazilian former professional footballer] Pele is interviewed, for example, is the abject poverty that he grew up in...maybe that's [impairment] the starting point for a lot of stories about Paralympic athletes.

As suggested by Daniel *is* impairment merely the starting point for Paralympic stories. As Nathan comments:

the way that the media present the Paralympic athletes is sometimes as if they're some form of supercrip who is performing a marvellous task...But then I think it does also show to disabled people what they can do, and it's a very fine line, I think, between being presented as some kind of super tragic but brave victim who somehow is able to rise above their dreadful impairment, but then just letting them get on with the Games as well.

The distinction between being seen as a 'supercrip' and being an example of what is possible for impaired bodies is pivotal. Abigail expresses a hope that her performances change opinions about the utility of the impaired body:

I do hope I've changed people's views and opinions on stuff, people with and without disabilities. I think you're often looked at as if you can't achieve anything or do anything, but disabled people often sit there thinking I can't do that, I can't do this and you're like 'yeah you actually can, get out and do it and give it a go, and enjoy it'.

However, is the apparent success of effort over adversity portrayed by Abigail giving a false sense of personal agency in the face of the social and physical structural barriers that operate within fields. The interplay of individual agency and structural determinism was expressed by Teresa, former multi-medal winning Paralympic swimmer, now a disability rights activist, who stresses:

I think there's a huge role for disabled athletes to play, but it's not a triumphing over tragedy thing. It's actually to say this is [sic] the barriers I have burst through to get where I've got to, and I'm doing that because I don't want the next generation of athletes to experience it.

Hence, the need to articulate in a sophisticated, not sensationalistic, manner the subtle interactions of disability, sport and society. During discussions, many interviewees expressed desires for the Paralympic Games to fulfil particular purposes that extended beyond sport and influence social

perceptions of disability within society. These comments will now be explored.

### An educational tool

Some interviewees expressed that the Paralympic Games represented an opportunity to use sport to address issues emanating from social perceptions of disability and sport (Steadward and Foster, 2003). For example some individuals expressed that the Paralympic Games could be used as an educational tool to learn about disability.

The potential for the Paralympic Movement to be a site for academic social research was alluded to by Daniel, who stated:

I think there is an opportunity for young scholars such as yourself to begin to unpack the world surrounding disability and impairment and so on and see what it [Paralympic Games] can tell us about broader society. So just as like in the past research on the Olympic Games has led to an understanding of particular cultural dynamics, I think that opportunity [to learn about disability through the Paralympic Movement] exists for individuals today.

However, the ability of the Paralympic Movement to attract social researchers was considered an issue by Donald who remarked: "There is still not a lot of people who have an interest with disability sport. There is some interest, but very little research has been carried out into disability sport."

Secondly, some interviewees consider the Paralympic Games could facilitate social learning about disability, outside of a formal educational setting. Daniel stated: "I think there is a feeling that if you show the public people with impairments engaging in high performance sporting activities that will educate them in terms of what ability is and begin to get and to question the distinction between disability and ability". In particular, it was felt the Paralympic Games could be used to change the perception of disability (IPC, 2008a). In interview, Connor speculated:

I think to some extent the [2008] Beijing Paralympic Games sort of highlights in a much bigger way what most countries would hope to achieve...I think probably their hope was by putting this high profile event on television across the whole country, and

obviously people in Beijing had the opportunity to go, it would change peoples view of disability as well as obviously being a sports event.

From an athlete's perspective, Abigail also recognised the potential for the Paralympic Games to impact upon the social perception of disability:

I do think it [Paralympic Games] opens another door to the whole social side of things, looking at people's acceptance of people with disabilities and looking at the fact people with disabilities can achieve. Disability is not the negative thing it was in the past.

The Paralympic Games is championed by Pdraig, a former multi-medal winning swimmer at the 1992 Paralympic Games and current promoter of grassroots disability sport participation, for providing a positive image of impaired bodies:

There are definitely people in our society, who see disabled people as a burden on the state or unable to do certain things and the Paralympics shows [disabled] people in a positive light...It [Paralympic Games] focuses on people's ability rather than disability, that [ability] comes up in that positive image. When someone sees a disabled person they automatically think what they can't do, rather than what they can, but when they see the Paralympics...they do start to change their opinions and attitudes, it becomes not a negative attitude but a positive one.

However, it is important to remain vigilant of the fact that the Paralympic Games only shows certain types of impaired bodies. This necessitates the perceived utility of the Paralympic Games to change the perception of *all* disabled bodies to be qualified; an issue discussed with Daniel:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel, for some people, the Paralympic Games is a way of learning about disability both by watching athletes perform and through explanations of classification?

*Daniel:* Yes and no. I think it can be used as a tool for young children at school to think about these issues, but the Paralympics has a very narrow lens on what disability is and so it's really important that people realise the Paralympics is not about every disability...its important the way the Paralympics is

used as a vehicle for education, because not all disability groups are included.

Hence the availability of social capital stemming from the ability to associate oneself with a Paralympian is selectively based on association with an impairment group. Disabled people may be adjudged to access some cultural capital from a sense of belonging with Paralympians vicariously via the media sub-field. However, it may be argued that the cultural capital available is impairment-specific with individuals actually only able to generate profit from athletes who possess *similar* impairments to themselves.

The viability of the Paralympic Games as a platform to educate people about disability and related social issues was questioned by several interviewees. For some the narrow focus on sport, rather than the day-to-day lives of Paralympians and disabled people more generally, restricts the potential for those watching the Paralympic Games to learn about disability. In this regard Sam, a single leg amputee and former bronze medal winning track athlete at the 1992 Paralympic Games states:

I guess the Paralympic Games is a bit of a shop window for lots of people in terms of understanding disability, but it has a very, very narrow focus. So someone who watches the Paralympics, even if someone was an avid fan of the Paralympics, they're not going to pick up on the fact that disabled people are discriminated against on housing, education, employment, transport, national health service, all of those types of things.

Other interviewees were more positive about the utility of the Paralympic Games to be a vehicle to raise awareness of the social issues facing disabled people. Trevor suggested that: "it [Paralympic Games] also demonstrates the inequalities of societies, even British society, when it comes to disability". Furthermore, in conversation Donald remarked that it was the social issue of disabled people trying to find paid employment that was allegedly part of the reasoning behind Robert Jackson's bid to stage the 1976 Paralympic Games in Toronto, Canada:

*Interviewer:* In one sense do you think the Paralympic Games is a vehicle to deal with social issues associated with disability?

For example, the need for more accessible buildings and infrastructure?

*Donald:* Yeah, that's my personal opinion...The founder of disability sport in Canada, Robert Jackson, an orthopaedic surgeon, he talked about why he hosted the Paralympics in '76 was because in some respects to develop the understanding of the potential of people with disabilities to find employment and to enable that crossover where the Paralympic games is a sports event but it is also a way of making significant social changes.

It is necessary however to consider the important distinction between raising awareness and actually enacting meaningful change concerning the social issues facing disabled people. This distinction was raised by Jack, who argues:

I think you can use sport as a vehicle to engage people to look at the wider circles, 'okay why are a certain percentage of disabled people unemployed?'...' why isn't there more provision in sport in school for disabled people?' so you can actually use the Paralympics to highlight cases. But then who's going to actually highlight those cases and take them forward? And when is a change going to be made in society' it's not a five minute process.

As such, it arguably takes more than a sporting event every two (time between Summer and Winter Paralympic Games) or four years (time between Summer Paralympic Games) to initiate and maintain social change. It is pertinent that when discussing the physical legacy of the Paralympic Games Cameron, an able-bodied wheelchair basketball administrator, chose to discuss how the changes in the environment, concerning the accessibility of urban environments, will also benefit the general public. In one sense it appeared that greater support, and willingness to invest economic capital, existed for these accessible changes because they benefited the majority, some able-bodied and some disabled, not mutually exclusively just disabled people:

It's also the general public who will benefit from any social spin offs [from the Paralympic Games]. From understanding the low curb is required, from understanding the public benefit in terms

of development that all the buses are ground loading buses, so the pram gets on, the old lady gets on with her walking impediment, maybe the visually impaired with bumps and things that let you know you're getting to the edge of the road. So these ideas are getting to the general public, disabled or not.

Some may argue this expression of self-interest expressed by an able-bodied member of the Paralympic field is symptomatic of a broader belief that self-interest fostered within habitus, and the pursuit of capital that benefits oneself, is a pertinent issue when considering the ability of the Paralympic field to achieve social change *for* disabled people. The perceived potential for the Paralympic field to contribute to social change for disabled people will now be considered.

#### A platform for empowerment

Within interviews, the perceived capacity for the Paralympic field to contribute to social change for disabled people was explored through a discussion of the potential for empowerment to be derived through involvement in the Paralympic Movement. While the motto, 'empower, inspire, achieve' has been somewhat relegated from the IPC's public rhetoric in recent years, the concept of empowerment is still used by NPCs such as CPC and appears in the IPC's vision, mission and values (IPC, 2010d).

During discussions with interviewees as to whether empowerment could be generated by the Paralympic field, a key concern, voiced by Michelle, was the ambiguity of the term 'empowerment':

I have real tensions with the word empowerment and I think it's just because I don't know how I think it should be defined, or how I think other people should define it, and to say it is specific to the Paralympic Movement, I think anybody can be empowered doing the things they do...I think it's something that a person themselves feels and through doing whatever they love doing or are comfortable doing, or confident doing, and I think it's just difficult to define how and where the IPC is getting this empowerment exactly...I always just kind of shy away from that empowerment stuff because I do think it's a very subjective phrase.



The ability of the Paralympic Movement to be empowering, but also disempowering, was expressed by Nathan who stated: “playing sport can be empowering as it shows people what they can do. But I’m not convinced the Paralympics empowers disabled people, and I think there’s a danger it disempowers them as well”. In relation to this, Michelle revealed that she was concerned about the specificity of the empowerment on offer via the Paralympic Movement:

sport may not be the vehicle for empowerment for all people. Again, it’s a specific sort of person that is going to get involved in the Paralympic sport. Just like any other able-bodied people; there are able-bodied people who hate sport and they find their outlet, empowerment, in other aspects whether it’s visual arts or whatever.

Significantly, Michelle also stated: “I really don’t think that empowerment is something that can be given to somebody”.

During discussions, members of the Paralympic field often perceived that it were Paralympians who had the greatest chance of being ‘empowered’ by the Paralympic Movement. It is perhaps unsurprising that the most visible members of the Paralympic Movement, namely Paralympians, are perceived in this way. However, as such the Paralympic Movement becomes somewhat of a closed shop, where only those directly involved in Paralympic sport, the athletes, have the ability to use the Paralympic Games for their own empowerment. Empowerment becomes a form of cultural capital exclusive to the Paralympian, inaccessible to other disabled bodies.

When discussing empowerment, Padraig felt that sporting achievement bred confidence and thus empowerment for an athlete:

If you’re a top sportsman and if you’re an Olympic or Paralympic athlete and you achieve the goals you have set yourself, or you exceed those targets you set yourself, that’s got to give you confidence and that confidence means your empowerment. You feel good, you recognise your abilities and that then empowers you and gives you the confidence to go out and achieve more.

In a practical sense, it was infact the physical strength and endurance developed through Padraig's Paralympic sporting career that literally empowered him and enable him to be independent:

My own personal experience was, when I came home from [1992] Barcelona [Paralympic Games] with 3 gold medals I felt I could take on the world and as a result of the physical exercise I lead as independent a life as anybody...what sport and Paralympic sport did for me, it gave me the confidence to say 'I can do that'. I live as independent a life as anybody...because of my swimming and my achieving in my swimming I've got that physical ability.

Sporting success and subsequent self-empowerment are, to some extent, a probable outcome of the specific habitus which athletes develop. Padraig recollects:

When you're training as an elite athlete you come across barriers all the time, but if you've got enough belief and confidence to do what you set yourself to do, be that winning a medal or being active in general then you can do it. Being physically fit you're a lot more able to do stuff and achieving gives you that confidence and belief that you can go out and do anything really.

Hence, cultural and symbolic capital accrued within the Paralympic field can assist an individual to operate in other fields.

The ability to transfer and use the cultural capital accrued during an athlete's time competing at a Paralympics Games, to other fields (Bourdieu, 1998a), was also apparent in discussion with Jack. He inadvertently referred to the potential exchange of social and cultural capital gained from competing at the Paralympic Games, into economic capital in the form of a new job/ career:

if you use it [Paralympic Games] right it can be a really good vehicle to engage in other areas either as an individual or as a sport or within a team. So, for example, if you want to go and have a career in sports journalism or the sports world or wherever else, the profile you get from being a Paralympian you can really use that to enhance your career as well.

The capability for cultural capital to be used in more than one field was also apparent to Michelle. She outlined that for some people, capital accrued in the Paralympic field may assist attempts to enter jobs/ professions that seek to address non-sporting social issues facing disabled people:

I know there are people who are vying to be spokespeople and use it [Paralympic Games] as a platform to get involved in other things. Yeah I think that's kind of an individual level of consciousness or awareness or want or interest in getting involved in those separate outside sport issues which are disability related.

Note, Michelle expresses this movement from the core of the Paralympic field to other Paralympic sub-fields, such as disability rights, as an individual choice. Hence, Michelle perceives the development of habitus within Paralympic sport does not necessarily facilitate or encourage a transition into disability politics. There was, however, a common belief among many individuals interviewed that the Paralympic Movement generated sporting and non-sporting role models for disabled people. In essence it was felt by some interviewees that one of the key purposes of the Paralympic Movement was to develop role models for disabled people, and will now be discussed.

#### A site for producing role models

During interview, there appeared to be two ways in which Paralympic role models were believed to contribute to the socialisation of disabled people, namely through acting as sporting and/ or lifestyle role models.

#### *Sporting role models*

Firstly, there was a consensus that Paralympians were important sporting role models for disabled people. The sporting performances of Paralympians at the Paralympic Games were deemed to have the potential to heighten awareness and knowledge of Paralympic sport as well as increasing sporting participation among disabled people. On a fundamental level, Nathan stated: "having the Paralympics there lets disabled people know they can do a sport". Daniel concurred: "its [Paralympic Games] strength is it shares with people in the world that people in wheelchairs can be physically

active and great sportsmen.” Paul stated the importance of Paralympic sport demonstrating the physiological, and thus sporting, capabilities of impaired bodies:

people used to think for people with my level of disability that we'd die if we pushed round the track twice. We had events which were 60metres and 100metres. In the late 70s, early 80s if we pushed round a track once people would say ' blimey what are you doing a marathon' and then when I first heard someone my level had done a marathon I was completely open-mouthed 'how is that possible?' Then you think it is possible and not only is it possible but I can do it, it's where your own self-imposed limitations are lifted. That has enabled people to go faster.

The relative appeal of the Paralympic Games to the media sub-field, compared to many other disability sport events, allows the Paralympic Games to promote sporting role models to a wide audience. In this regard, Nathan outlined: “It [Paralympic Games] does promote disabled sport to a very wide audience who wouldn't normally see it”. This 'wide audience' arguably includes both able- and disabled bodies, as media coverage of Paralympians in newspapers and television news bulletins increases the likelihood of disabled people, currently with no interest in sport, inadvertently becoming aware of the Paralympic Movement. It is the receptivity of these non-sporting impaired individuals' habitus to Paralympic sport that will influence whether an interest in the Paralympic Movement is maintained.

The importance of the media sub-field in transmitting Paralympic role models into the homes of disabled people was emphasised by Padraig who stated:

you see football played on the TV and it's men with two arms and legs running around trying to get a ball in the back of the net. Now if you take a leg away or someone's ability to stand up or think clearly, then you get the question 'well how can they do sport?'...It [Paralympic Games] does show the disabled community what they can do [in sports] if they want to.

However, to state that a Paralympian is a homogeneous advertising billboard for Paralympic sport, who appeals to *all* impaired bodies, is a

misleading generalisation. Paul highlighted the issue of certain Paralympians acting as sporting role models and attracting individuals to Paralympic sports for whom there does not exist the opportunity to compete, due to their impairment not being a Paralympic class:

I'm sure there's plenty of young girls who go into wheelchair sport and someone like Tanni [Grey-Thompson] would encourage someone to do that, but it's very difficult if they don't fit nicely into a classification system. Like many athletes the reality of it is much tougher. They go down blind alleys, racing away, hoping they can achieve something, where the coaches and people think 'oh no you can't, there isn't even a Paralympic class for you to race in, your disability isn't represented in it'. Although you can have someone acting as a role model, it's not a very credible one really.

In discussions such as this, it became apparent how impairment can become cognitively embodied within an individual's habitus, thereby influencing which Paralympians are considered representative to yourself. Sam commented:

I think with disability you identify with people who are the same. If I see the Paralympics, I'm trying to identify with those athletes who are like me. It's difficult, I've been an amputee for twenty odd years now, I find it difficult to relate to how people do things with two feet, so sometimes when I see someone do something I think 'how do they do that', but then I realise 'oh yeah, they've got two feet, I've only got one'. I sort of relate to how would I do that, so I can't imagine what it would be like to run on two false legs, so Oscar Pistorius in one sense, I think he's amazing, in another sense I wonder what that's like.

An intense sense of belonging to a particular impairment group, located within an impaired individual's habitus, has inevitable consequences on the accruing social and cultural capital that emanates from identifying with a particular Paralympian. The potential for Paralympians to be lifestyle role models will now be considered.

#### *Lifestyle role models for disabled people*

The issue of Paralympians being representative of some disabled people, and not others, is relevant when considering Paralympians as

potential lifestyle role models for disabled people (Cashman and Thomson, 2008). By showing what is possible, it was suggested that Paralympians had the potential to be lifestyle role models for individuals with a disability. According to Teresa:

what it [Paralympic Games] does at a more grassroots level, is represent to disabled people whose life is driven by the medical model of disability what is possible...I feel there is a much greater role to play for disabled athletes in terms of presenting themselves as role models for disabled people, particularly young disabled people who are really battling against the most horrendous prejudice and low aspiration.

Some Paralympians are arguably examples of achievement beyond sport to disabled people, as they have relative independence being employed and rewarded for their physical capabilities. It may be argued this is a relatively uncommon situation for many disabled people (Oliver, 1990). In accord, Sam stated: "I have heard parents say to their disabled children look if so and so [referring to a Paralympian] can do this, just think what you can do; so there's an element of role models". Pdraig perceived that a positive impact could be made on a sedentary impaired individual who was observing a *similar* Paralympic athlete perform at the Paralympic Game:

if they can see someone with a similar impairment as themselves... something is bound to click inside them, and it doesn't always work... but a lot of people will say 'hang on a minute they're just like me and won a Paralympic gold medal, why shouldn't I' and I'm not saying they're going to want to compete in the Paralympics, the fact that that individual they have seen has achieved, it's got to set something off in their head 'well if they can do it, why can't I'.

However, how similar are Paralympians to individuals with a disability who do not partake in sport. The cultural capital possessed by both Paralympians and non-sporting disabled people from membership of an apparent minority group within society, 'the disabled', only becomes usable if both groups identify a commonality of existence and purpose. Are Paralympians identifiable and perceived to be basically similar to impaired individuals who

have either no or limited interest and exposure to disability sport? This potential issue became apparent during the interview process.

When talking with Jerry the potential for contradiction and conflict between Paralympians and other disabled people were identifiable:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel Paralympic athletes can be lifestyle role models for people with impairments not currently competing within the sport

*Jerry:* Yeah definitely, I don't see why not

*Interviewer:* Because it has been suggested because they're so physically developed, others don't see those athletes as being disabled

*Jerry:* Yeah I totally agree with that, that's how I look at it anyway. I just do what I do, I don't look at myself as a disabled person really

Thus, this statement would in fact seemingly diminish any ideological connection, and potential social and cultural capital that could be exchanged between disabled people and Paralympians (Huang and Brittain, 2006). The perceived distance between Paralympians and individuals with a disability who partake in recreational sport was apparent to Nathan:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel non-athletic individuals with a disability can identify with Paralympic athletes?

*Nathan:* I don't think so...Disabled leisure and disabled sport are not the same and to think that with disabled people, well you're all disabled so you must all identify with each other, I think is a bit of a simplistic way of viewing disability. It risks homogenisation of disabled people into a single group...the more elite the athletes become the more distant the athletes become from your standard disabled person and the more that people start to make a living out of it then again even further they get away, because they can then train for twelve hours a day so there's an even greater distance

The perceived social distance between Paralympians and individuals who would identify as being 'disabled' plays a key part when discussing the use of Paralympians in the pursuit of social change.

### Paralympians as activists

Aligned with the issue of the feasibility for Paralympians to be role models, is discussion into whether Paralympians can and should be activists to enact social change for disabled people. Paul felt that by Paralympians merely presenting themselves to the media in an attractive manner, this would positively impact on the perceptions of, and social issues surrounding, disabled people:

When Tanni [Grey-Thompson] is used for example as the spokesperson for [Paralympic] sport, I think she's very articulate, she's a good speaker, she puts on a very good TV performance. So I would rather have someone articulate and attractive looking doing it, to say the things and to make the points about sport and disability, you want to have a positive image. I think what she says is irrelevant to that.

This pre-occupation with style over substance of argument is most problematic for individuals who do not fulfil the socially defined aesthetic demands placed on athletes and disabled people.

Other interviewees felt that the habitus of athletes prevented Paralympians' being effective social activists for change. Nathan outlines: "a disabled athlete is very single minded on being an athlete they're not minded on promoting the rights of disabled people". The perspective that athletes are focussed solely on their own sporting performances was shared by Sam who stated:

You never have a Paralympic athlete complaining about education, housing and employment and all those types of things... if the system is working for them, then they won't say anything. So if someone's been successful in their particular category and is earning a living from it and winning gold medals and getting some prestige from it, they're not going to complain. They're [athletes] combining, colluding if you like, not speaking up for those other athletes that can't compete or are being excluded for whatever reason.

Some interviewees considered that it was the habitus developed by an athlete, necessary for sporting success, that was in conflict with being a social activist. In the experience of Cameron, some athletes would only think



about and attended to the issues that directly affected their sporting performance: “some of the athletes don't care as long as the events run and are run well, they remember the accommodation, food, transport, did they win.” Edward was keen to stress that he felt that the incompatibility between being an elite athlete and a social activist extended beyond the Paralympic field:

it is about building that critical awareness which I think there should be more of, more athletes, and this is not a disability thing, its athletes in general, particularly elite athletes need to be thoughtful about how they're existing within these systems.

The extended amount of time spent intensively training by elite athletes, whose economic capital is dependent upon their athletic performances, along with the corporate image that athletes are arguably expected to maintain in representing their sponsors, including national and sporting governing bodies; all contribute to minimising the ability of Paralympians to act as activists for a social cause. This particularly so if the cause being championed is liable to being viewed as radical and controversial. Indeed the compartmentalisation of perceived social responsibility was noted by Paul who stated that social change was not in the remit of athletes:

I don't really think it is the responsibility of athletes to do that [generate awareness of disability issues]. What the athletes need to do is present something credible and entertaining for the public. Cities in their bids for the Paralympics are going to have to have accessible transport, accommodation, they're [administrators] going to have to meet the standards that are set out by the IPC.

In spite of aforementioned pressures on athletes, Teresa, reflecting her habitus as a result of her movement through the Paralympic field from athlete to disability rights activist, felt that irrespective of the burdens on Paralympic athletes, Paralympians should strive for social change for disabled people:

when I was an athlete I didn't think about the political experiences of disabled people because I was so competitive...I

wouldn't want athletes to feel burdened by the fact that they were having to take on a political stance as well, because focusing on competition and sport is a 24/7 occupation, but in a sense life is politics and politics is life, and you can't neatly separate the two and I think there has to be a responsibility on athletes as well, to some degree, to understand the role they play in shifting society on from its very paternalistic view of disability.

As discussed above, the expectation and potential for Paralympians to act as activists in pursuit of social change for disabled people is a contentious issue which arguably alludes to conflicts that potentially exist between the disability rights sub-field and other Paralympic sub-fields. The perceived causes for this apparent conflict between the disability rights sub-field and other Paralympic sub-fields were explored during the interview process and will now be discussed.

#### Conflict between Paralympic field and disability rights sub-field

Potential conflict between the disability rights sub-field and Paralympic field was perceived to emanate from several sources. Some interviewees expressed issue with the structure of the Paralympic Movement. Sam questioned whether there was such a thing as a Paralympic Movement stating:

A movement is a whole load of people agreeing to go in one direction. The problem with using the term movement in the Paralympics is I don't think it is ... you've got the management who stay in those management positions for years and years...the athletes are a moving, transitory group of people passing through.

Furthermore, Nathan suggests the IPC lacks the freedom for disabled people to shape and direct Paralympic sport that a radical social movement would: "I get the impression that the Paralympic Movement is a top down affair. I think it is moving to have more disabled people in charge, but I think there is a long history of paternalism within it".

Opposition toward the Paralympic Movement from the disability rights sub-field arguably stems from the perceived purposes and desires of those

involved in the Paralympic Movement. From Sam's experience: "the disabled peoples movement had virtually no interest in the Paralympics, issues of body fascism and this obsession with trying to be 'normal' in inverted commas, and be the same as non-disabled people, was something that a lot of people in the disabled peoples movement were against". Opposition toward Paralympic sport was keenly felt by Teresa as she moved from the athlete sub-field to the disability rights sub-field:

I remember for a long time, when I was finding my way in the disability rights movement actually ignoring the fact I had a Paralympic past, because what I didn't want to do was confront these stropy crips who thought Paralympic athletes were all scum of the earth...I really turned my back and felt disillusioned and drew myself into disability rights activism, where the view of Paralympic sport was it's disabled people who were desperate to be normal. Which I knew not to be the case.

How disability is portrayed through Paralympic sport is an obvious issue for all members of the Paralympic field. For the IPC sub-field and those individuals and groups that operate within the Paralympic field who possess a desire for Paralympic sport to be seen as elite sport, quite often a consequence of this is that impairment and disability are de-emphasised.

#### *Involvement of able-bodied in Paralympic Movement*

The involvement of able-bodied people Paralympic sport administration was envisaged by some interviewees as key to preventing integration between the disabled people's movement and the Paralympic Movement. Sam stated: "the Paralympic Movement is so dominated in its management and direction by non-disabled people, how could it possibly see itself as part of the disabled people's movement". Teresa felt able-bodied people were paternalistically controlling her. This perception of dominance coincided with an arguable shift in the purpose of Paralympic sport from a rehabilitation and participatory background to an approach more rooted in high performance sport (Howe, 2008a). Teresa suggests:

I think the shift between '88 and '92 I think was quite significant. There was a much stricter regime in terms of training, in terms

of control as far as where we were, what we were doing and who knew where we were at certain times. I really started to struggle with the kind of control that was being placed upon us...I was being treated like a child and at the time I was mid-late 20s and I found that very hard to take...we had to be in bed at a certain time and we had to absolutely respond to instructions, actions being given to us by people in charge of the swimming team, that I thought was just far too much. By then I knew what I needed to do to win races and win medals. I guess because away from competition i.e. training, I had to train the vast majority of the time on my own.

The 'control' Teresa describes, is arguably a common experience for elite athletes. These experiences represent the implications of Paralympic sport becoming high performance centred (Howe, 2008a). Yet Teresa's habitus interprets these demands as Paralympians being oppressed by able-bodied coaches/administrators. I would suggest this leads to professionalisation being conceived as another form of institutionalisation of disabled bodies by able-bodied oppressors (Barnes, 1994; Oliver, 1990). The perceived domination of Paralympians may also resonate from the perception that individuals involved in Paralympic sport, according to Teresa up until at least the 1992 Paralympic games, had enter the Paralympic field from the rehabilitative field in which, Teresa perceives, individuals possess a particular habitus which envisages the need to cure disabled bodies:

1992 was a very transitional Paralympics in that there were coaches but there was still this body of healthcare professionals or people coming from a healthcare professional background who inevitably, because of their training, see disabled people in terms of healthcare models, that were very paternalistic...what I didn't need was either rehab, cure or care.

It was felt that bodily cure, rather than enhancing sporting performance, was the key objective of these former healthcare professionals. Problematically, all athletes are likely to require cure and rehabilitation from sporting injuries, however in the Paralympic field the development of a particular habitus by some Paralympians, as expressed by Teresa, creates a tension arguably based on physicality rather than sporting behaviour. Teresa perceived the BPA treated Paralympians as charitable cases, rather than legitimate

athletes: “I thought they were a bunch of do-gooders” (Teresa). For Teresa there existed a cognitive dissonance between competing as a Paralympian and her understanding of disability rights. A conflict for her habitus which she felt could not be resolved while being a Paralympian, forcing her to retire:

I remember it [1992 Paralympic Games] being, on the one hand extremely successful for me, on the other it was a turning point for me particularly, I thought this is it, I can't function as a human being and as an athlete in this environment and once that started infiltrating my thinking about sport, which I utterly love I thought I have to stop now.

To lessen retirement caused by the perceived dominance and patronisation of Paralympians by able-bodied people within the Paralympic field, it may be argued that able-bodied people should be prohibited from the Paralympic field, primarily the IPC sub-field. However introducing this 'body bar'<sup>40</sup> was perceived by other interviewees as regression, not progression, for the Paralympic Movement.

Prohibiting able-bodied involvement in Paralympic sport was recognised to stem from the ideology of the disabled people's movement (Oliver, 1990) by Edward:

The Paralympics has wanted to maintain this separate identity and some of it is because of this feeling that disabilities are a separate culture, a separate world, that they don't fit in...it's messy and confusing because they're...saying we want to promote inclusion and empowerment, but at the same time their maintaining this separate world.

However, Edward felt that this insular perspective would fail to assist the Paralympic Movement, particularly as the Paralympic field relies upon several interconnecting sub-fields, all of which, like most fields, have able-bodied involvement: “I think they [disabled activists] have been resistant to outside help and will hopefully invite a debate [with able-bodied people], because that's the only way social change will happen”. Without debate and co-operation the apparent corporeal divide between 'them and us', disabled and able-bodied, will inevitably remain entrenched.

Some interviewees believe it is important to include able-bodied *and* disabled people in Paralympic sport. Abigail stated:

if the whole disability sport stuff was only organized by disabled people it would be a nightmare. I think it needs that mix. It needs that experience from other fields and other walks of life, but it needs to be kept so that its about disability sport first and foremost and its getting that balance where you don't let people coming in from able-bodied sport without understanding the disability side of it.

Hence, Abigail is expressing the need for sub-fields within the Paralympic field to exchange capital resources for the benefit of each sub-field, and the Paralympic field as a whole. This is perhaps a somewhat functionalistic perspective over-emphasising the positive utility of fields and failing to recognise that there will be, as in sport, winners and losers in field relations (Bourdieu, 1993; 1998a).

Several interviewees stated they felt the proportion and position of able-bodied individuals, compared to disabled people, within the Paralympic Movement needed attention. Edward stated: "with regard to disability sport; Paralympics, Special Olympics, Deaflympics, if people with disabilities aren't involved within legitimate leadership roles that's probably problematic". Furthermore, Daniel outlined "there really needs to be an increase in the involvement of individuals with impairments in establishing future directions for the Paralympic Games. However that does not mean that able-bodied individuals should not be involved in the movement". A statement endorsed by Michelle:

I don't think it [Paralympic Games] should be run to the exclusion of able-bodied people, but I think there should be more people with disabilities involved than there are. In Beijing I think...I was the only one of the staff [in my section] who had a disability and it was because I was athlete services officer so it had to be a former athlete who was in that role, by default, and it does seem a little ridiculous to me if you think of women's sports movements, foundations for other stratified groups there is a lot more involvement of that particular population in things than I think there currently is at the Paralympic Games.

While some interviewees called for a re-balance in the proportion of able-bodied and disabled involved in the Paralympic field, others utilised the rhetoric of 'it should be the best person for job' who is involved in Paralympic sport. This view was expressed by, among others, Cameron:

If you take a group or any minority group seriously you have the best person for the job. Now that person might be deaf, might be in a wheelchair, might be a learning disability but it's the best person for the job...just because Fred's in wheelchair doesn't mean he understands wheelchair sport...very often people come with their own self focus and you can fall into that trap; 'well he's in a wheelchair he knows best'. If he in the wheelchair knows what he's looking for and is experienced enough to say 'yeah that's fine for me but for the tetraplegics or visually impaired that's not great' this person needs to be able to do that.

Here, Cameron is emphasising all individuals with an impairment (physical, sensory or intellectual) are not homogeneous. Furthermore, individuals with a disability, like all people, will still be 'self-focussed' and not necessarily appreciate the needs of other disability groups or range of impaired individuals within the same disability group. Daniel also championed the approach of recruiting the 'best' person for the Paralympic Movement. However, by expressing the desire to have the best person for the job, Daniel arguably risked the wrath of the disabled peoples movement by stating:

I want to increase the knowledge base, the awareness of the individuals within the Paralympic Movement and these sorts of things and that might be removing some of the people with impairments and encouraging able-bodied people into the movement, its not about disability its about getting the best people possible working for the shared goals and visions of the movement.

'The best person for the job' rhetoric could be perceived as a tool to defuse equitable employment issues for minority groups. However, the subjectivity and potential for ideological hijacking that the term 'best' is vulnerable to should not be discounted. For example, Sam believed administration in Paralympic sport should be conducted by those who are the

best person for the job. Yet, he believed physicality was key to defining the best candidate for a particular job:

[In the 1990s] I was the only disabled person on a management position [within the BPA]. It seemed blatantly obvious to me that non-disabled people didn't put any value on disabled people, it was always well it's the best possible person for the job, it doesn't matter whether they're disabled or not. That wasn't the way I saw it. I agreed it should be the best person for the job but as far as I was concerned disabled people were the best people to do it.

Hence, Sam is articulating the perceived value of personal experience from being a disabled person acting as a relevant qualification for employment within disability sport. Thus, reaffirming the prominent role that physicality can be seen to play within the Paralympic field.

### Summary

During interview individuals within the Paralympic field believed the Paralympic Games possessed, or should endeavour to fulfil, a variety of purposes. For some the purpose of the Paralympic Games is to display an elite sporting event, where the focus is on sport not disability. There was debate as to whether the Paralympic Games overtime, and today, was perceived as elite, or was perhaps viewed by some as rehabilitative and/or focused on participation. Some interviewees believed the Paralympic Games could, and should, be used for other purposes beyond facilitating sporting competition. The Paralympic Games were perceived as a tool to educate about disability and empower disabled people through the creation of sporting and lifestyle role models. However, in attempting to address these issues, it was important to question the viability of using the Paralympic Movement to address social issues more commonly associated with disability rights initiatives and legislation. A comparison between the disability rights sub-field and Paralympic field as a whole led to discussions concerning the involvement of able-bodied individuals in Paralympic sport. The viability of including able-bodied and/or disabled people both in unison and mutually exclusively was briefly outlined. The importance of physicality (DePauw,



1997) within the Paralympic field will continue to be explored as the suitability of the impaired body as a vehicle for staging an elite sporting event will now be discussed.

## **Findings and Discussion - Suitability of Impaired Bodies as Vehicles for Elite Disability Sport**

Within the eight sub-fields<sup>41</sup> that form the Paralympic field there exist consensual and conflicting relations. Individuals and groups shape the Paralympic field by competing for different types of capital in pursuit of multiple forms of profit and/or power (Bourdieu, 1993, 1997, 1998a). The current Paralympic Games is a product of the previous, current and anticipated future battles for capital resources. Interviewees provided an insight into the alliances and rivalries that exist in the Paralympic field. This chapter firstly documents the impact of impairment upon the structure of the Paralympic Games. Subsequently, the impacts of social perceptions of different disabilities are explored. Through these discussions the perceived suitability of including certain impairment groups within the Paralympic games are explored.

### **Creating Paralympic events**

The Summer Paralympic Games host a *selection* of impaired athletes taken from different disability groups, themselves made up of a range of impairments. This amalgamation of *differently* impaired bodies creates issues for the Paralympic Games.

It became apparent during interviews that the manifestation of *certain* Paralympic events were influenced by the specific demands of some impaired bodies. For example, in relation to the 1984 Paralympic Games, Barry recollected:

For the 400 metres for these two classes [T11 and T12], runners were entitled to have a guide; so there's an allocation of two lanes rather than one. It meant there would only be 4 [athletes] on an 8 lane track...They proposed to qualify 8 people for a final and to then run them in two races, and simply to take the times and rank the times, and give the gold medal to the fastest and so on.

This structure is a direct response to the consequences of being visually impaired athletes. However, do these amendments alter the perceived value of these events? A race with only four athletes may, for some, fail to represent legitimate elite sporting competition. It is engrained in habitus, from watching the Olympic Games that at least eight runners should compete in each race. To alter this could render those four visually impaired Paralympians competing to fail to be ascribed the symbolic capital afforded to *elite* athletes. As such, media and sponsorship sub-fields may be unwilling to provide economic capital for sporting performances which lack the perceived credibility to be labelled as elite sport.

This scenario can be used to trigger a debate about which sports events within the Paralympic Games are recognisably credible examples of elite sport in the eyes of certain Paralympic stakeholders. Connor outlined some key determinants which may influence whether certain sports events within the Paralympic Games will be sites for the production of elite sporting performances endowed with symbolic capital:

Is it a proper event if only three people enter it? So you start to draw lines about what is an elite event. You then get issues around, yes there are 10 athletes in this event; the first 3 of them do the 100metres in 14 seconds. The next one does it in 18 seconds, the next in 22 [seconds], the rest are between 25 and 30 [seconds]. Is that elite? So does the event have to be competitive in a large enough group?

Thus, there exists the need for quality and quantity of athletic talent to generate elite sporting competition. Yet, when using impaired bodies, from different disability groups, the Paralympic Games is subject to restrictions, in quantity and arguably quality, of athletic talent. The existence and consequences of small Paralympic athlete populations will now be discussed.

#### Small Paralympic athlete populations

Building athlete populations within the Paralympic field was a significant issue to interviewees. Reasons for small Paralympic athlete populations were considered self-evident by Barry, who commented:

If I've got something that stops me walking or running properly I'm probably going to play the guitar...or do something that doesn't make me depend on a physical aptitude...once you get degrees of disability or impairment then, particularly in the female side, you don't get people committing themselves to physical activity in many cases.

The prospect of becoming an elite sportsman/woman may not be deemed a viable possibility within a disabled person's habitus. Alternatively, some impaired individuals may believe competing in sport would constantly remind them of their impairment. This may particularly be true for individuals with acquired impairments, for whom current sporting performances may be significantly less, i.e. slower or less powerful, than those achieved when able-bodied. Thus influencing the habitus of an individual with an acquired impairment, who may perceive their own achievements as failing to yield the symbolic capital resonating from legitimatised sporting performance.

If the impairment groups from which the athletes emerge are themselves small, this increasingly limits athlete populations. Connor outlined for some impairment groups: “the populations aren't that big, there aren't that many people out there who have that particular disability...where you have...double leg amputees, there's a very small population worldwide, which means there's a very small population who are athletically minded”. The achievements of individuals competing in events with small athlete populations are rewarded in the Paralympic Games with medals and the cultural capital that stems from having represented your country at an international elite disability sport event. However, these sporting performances may be devalued precisely because they are achieved within small athlete populations.

#### Narrow participation pyramids within Paralympic sports

Some members of the Paralympic field perceived because of relatively small athlete populations, that it was easier for impaired individuals to reach the top of their sport. Connor stated: “it's [Paralympic sport] very different from the able-bodied sport structure...it's a very high pinnacle but a very narrow base in most areas of the sport, in some sports its almost a straight

line...as soon as you come in the bottom, the chances are you'll finish up at the top because there's so few athletes playing that sport". Barry concurred, asserting: "to get from nowhere to Beijing [2008 Paralympic Games] was relatively easy for some. It's a lot easier to do that than it is for those folk in that picture [point to poster of nondescript Olympic swimmer] it's easier to climb the Paralympic ladder". Barry supported this by using his own experience: "I coached a girl who participated in Beijing [2008 Paralympic Games] she had no heats, no semi finals, two finals. In both cases one lane was empty. She came away with two medals. Is that good?" This alludes to the issue of how athletes, performing against few competitors, for reasons out of their control, have the value of their performances questioned. Paralympians can only influence the level of training and performance they achieve. The cultural capital of being part of the athlete contingent at a Paralympic Games is not sufficient to ensure your athletic performances will accrue the symbolic capital emanating from being perceived an elite sportsman/woman. Teresa commented she felt her Paralympic achievements, because they occurred against small groups of athletes in straight finals, were viewed as less valuable: "I suppose because there were less athletes with higher levels of impairment...we were much more likely to not have to go through a heats process. So many of us just went straight into finals and for many people that was considered an easier ride, which I would disagree with entirely". Thus, the field of athletes against which Paralympians compete is perceived as significant to how they are perceived as sportsmen/women. Dennis considered the issue of small athlete populations had a detrimental effect upon Paralympic athletes' claims of being elite sportsmen/women: "these lot here [Paralympians], will always be claiming, with Tanni [Grey-Thompson] doing it, that they have to fight as hard and work for their medals, as IOC's [Olympians] do. So that's the elephant in the room no-one talks about". Barry also acknowledged the role of small athlete populations in undermining the legitimacy of labelling Paralympians as elite athletes: "a lot of Paralympic athletes have to believe...I'm a world class

athlete that's why I'm winning. It's not because I'm the best of 20 or the best of 2million”.

The importance of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) framing interpretations of what is or is not credible as an elite sporting competition is apparent within the Paralympic field. The consequences of small athlete populations are challenging for the athlete and IPC sub-field. During interview, some individuals suggested strategies through which these issues could perhaps be minimised or eliminated.

### *Strategy 1: Less specialisation among Paralympians*

One strategy, experienced by some interviewees, involved athletes being less selective in which events they competed in. Rather than an athlete only training and competing for their 'best' event, athletes could also compete in other events, thereby maintaining the number of participants within an event. This strategy was experienced by two interviewees, themselves former Paralympic swimmers. Teresa, a swimmer with a severe impairment, recollected that at the 1988 Paralympic Games:

From my experience, given I was a class 2 and 3 in swimming...swimmers were expected, if you were going to go abroad, you had to be a jack of all trades, in that you weren't really allowed to specialise in any particular event or distance which, for non-disabled swimmers it would have been a complete nonsense to expect that. So I remember swimming loads and loads of races.

Michelle expressed having had a similar experience when she competed at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games:

at [Sydney 2000] Paralympic games I swam what I would say are 'off events' but I think it was more to try and save events and get the numbers so that it wouldn't be deleted for the next cycle...my coach being quite aware of what was going on at the international level would put me into events which weren't necessarily my best events so that there would be the numbers.

Michelle expressed mixed feelings about being an athlete and being used to make up the numbers in events she did not wish to compete in. I would argue

she was concerned that any symbolic capital accrued from being viewed by others as a legitimate elite swimmer would be tarnished, even nullified, by her less impressive performances in her 'off events'. Michelle commented:

I think at the time I was really frustrated by it [swimming in 'off events'], 'I look ridiculous in this event, it's not my best event, it makes me look silly and doesn't make me look like a serious athlete' sort of thing, but I think politically you know, they were trying to do a good thing...I guess you just do those sorts of things and other people try to do the same too...looking back now it might not have projected the high performance athlete image, but if it saves an event, it saves an event...I think [now] in Paralympic sport; people are getting more specialised in their events...competition is getting better and it's harder to dominate across events.

It remains to be proven whether long term this increasing specialisation will result in less athletes competing in classes, thereby preventing events from being feasible and thus not staged at the Paralympic Games. There is a risk whereby athletes in striving to represent more closely the professionalised, specialised model of elite able-bodied sport find themselves limited by the specific circumstances of the Paralympic field. Alternatively, if Paralympians did participate in several sports, thereby boosting small athlete populations, would their performances still be perceived to lack credibility. This may occur as Paralympic events are won by athletes who are not seen to dedicate themselves to *excellence* within a single sport, but instead *participate* in many.

### *Strategy 2: Combine athlete classes*

An alternative strategy discussed with interviewees, in part a response to the small athletic populations within the Paralympic field, is the combining of Paralympic classes, thereby creating a larger number of athletes within certain events (Daly and Vanlandewijck, 1999; Sherrill, 1989). The importance of creating equivalent athlete populations when combining classes (Howe and Jones, 2006) was evident to Barry: "The problem always, from a governance point of view, is to assure yourself, or be comfortable with the idea, that you're not disadvantaging someone who is already

disadvantaged, by putting them with a group who has got slightly less impairment than the other". The aim is for an athlete's success to stem from their sporting ability not their impairment. Combining classes can bolster athlete numbers within events also creating time and space at the Paralympic Games into which other events can be included. Barry provided an example of one event where he felt combining classes could be advantageous:

I wouldn't say you'd get all 3<sup>42</sup> [visual impairment classes] capable of competing against one another but these two [F12 and F13] could do shot, discus, javelin you could put them together...If you run a marathon, you could virtually put all 3 [visual impairment classes] together because I've seen lads totally blind running a marathon in two hours thirty-four [minutes] and I think that year that was the fastest blind marathon runner in the world.

Combining classes is however an intensely divisive issue due to the potential for impairment groups to be removed or systematically disadvantaged by having to compete with differently impaired athletes. Somewhat controversially during interview Connor suggested that to overcome small athlete populations; arm amputees and some athletes with cerebral palsy could compete in the same event:

if you've got an arm amputee running 800metres you might only have eight or ten of them in the world at a good standard who, I was going to say deserve an opportunity, who are at that level, who could quite easily be compared to minimally disabled cerebral palsy athletes, who at the top level there are probably only four or five running the 800 metres.

However, I would argue this would inevitably lead to arm amputees winning each race, as the restriction to a runner of an amputated arm is arguably less than the limiting effect of CP on an athlete's gait and running proficiency. Seemingly breaching the notion that sport should above all be equitable, Connor suggested:

We need to find compromises to allow athletes to compete even if neither group is 100% fairly catered for. We have to find a way of getting the best athletes, whatever the disability, to the track in some way or 'other, and one of the problems over the last 20



years has been that lack of a compromise, from all sorts of people.

The assertion, that the intentional loss of fair competition within the Paralympic field is a worthwhile trade-off to combine more classes and permit a certain package of sporting performance to be exhibited at the Paralympic Games, is deeply concerning (Richter et al., 1992). Especially as this idea is being voiced by an individual who has operated in a highly influential position within the IPC sub-field.

These discussions with Barry and Connor also raise the question of how far a sporting competition should be engineered to ensure certain impaired bodies still compete at the Paralympic Games. Some may argue Paralympic classes of athletes should not be safeguarded, instead left to sink or swim, within the Paralympic field. This issue will now be discussed.

### Sink or Swim

The issue of which events warrant inclusion within the Paralympic Games was discussed in detail with some interviewees. Connor outlined some athletes, for example T42s<sup>43</sup>, were safeguarded in the Paralympic Games, even though there is only a small number of these athletes: “You almost ring fence that small group of [T42] athletes...You go through each of the disability levels and groups to try to do the same thing, but you've still got to get to a stage where you say you can't do it with that group. There isn't a representative group there to do it with”. Limited time and resources mean all athlete populations cannot be included in the Paralympic Games, and thus some will inevitably find their events cut or combined (Sherrill, 1989). Selecting events for the Paralympic Games proves to be a significant challenge as decisions are made about the value of Paralympic classes created from dramatically different athlete populations (Richter et al., 1992). To illustrate this point Connor discussed the differences between dwarf athlete and wheelchair athlete populations:

the dwarf population, it isn't a large population of people, but at the elite end, there are fifteen or twenty athletes who are very close together in terms of performance, so is that a valid group

to be in the Paralympic level? If you compare that group to athletes in a wheelchair for the 1500m; within 5 seconds of one another you might have 300 athletes. So how do you compare that [wheelchair athlete] group with that [dwarf athlete] group? Do you find a place for both of them in the Games or does one get moved out?

To remove an event because there are insufficient athletes to justify its inclusion, arguably leads to additional concerns about the forcing of impaired bodies into certain sports. This was apparent when interviewing Connor, who talking about T51s<sup>44</sup>, stated:

if we continue to create a quota for them [T51s] the athletes will turn up because they get a chance to go to the Paralympics and maybe they will get a medal because there's only half a dozen of them, but is that sport? Or are we better off saying there are opportunities somewhere else in the Paralympic Games. If those athletes are ambitious to get to the Paralympics they need to play [wheelchair] rugby or Boccia or whatever.

This could legitimise certain sports as viable, moreover desirable, sports for certain athletes with specific impairments to compete in. These events, and athletes, are then laced with the symbolic capital of legitimacy as certain sports may be accepted as credible manifestations of Paralympic sport. However, athletes in other sports might be unable to exchange their cultural capital into other forms of capital, such as symbolic capital and/or economic capital, as legitimated Paralympic sports monopolise capital resources for a particular disability group. Thus certain sports/events become the domain of certain impairment groups. This potential dilemma was ignored by Connor who stated:

If they [T51s] just enjoy athletics, let them enjoy athletics at home. If there's enough of them...they will get an opportunity in the national team or the European championships, the steps will then get created because the pressure comes to put the events in.

However, I would suggest Connor is over-emphasising the ease of re-including former Paralympic events considering the limit of around 4000 athletes (Mason, 2002) and desires of other sports to enter the Paralympic

Games. As such, instead of waiting for sports to drop out, only to later consider re-instating them with greater athlete numbers, it may be important to safeguard certain Paralympic events now to increase participation amongst this impairment group in this current Paralympic event. However, which events justify having their position safeguarded within the Paralympic Games. The dilemma of removing or attempting to improve participation within a particular event was discussed with Cameron, who stated:

For credibility, at the Paralympics if there's not enough people doing the sport then yes they should disappear. But equally it's easy to be on an ivory tower and say that, but people should be supporting and getting people into those sports as well and in some countries the National Paralympic Committees is all that exists, so they concentrate on the sports that work for them, don't look at developing other sports. So they cut off what doesn't work, and eventually you end up with a very tiny [participation] pyramid.

The need for Paralympic events to act as sanctuaries where sporting role models can encourage increased participation was alluded to by Connor:

You've got this conflict between the T54 track person who, the best in the world has 500 behind him who would like to beat him and the Cp5 100 metre runner, severely disabled ambulatory runner, who probably only has 12 people behind him who want to be the Paralympic champion. Part of that is people don't realise that as a severely disabled ambulatory athlete they're capable of running the 100 metres because probably all their lives they've been told they're not capable of doing it.

To some extent there seems to exist two types of Paralympians. There are those who are perceived to deserve to compete at the Paralympic Games because they face intense competition from a large population of athletes within their event. Alternatively, there are other Paralympians, who compete within small athlete populations but nevertheless can be perceived to justify inclusion by giving their athletic population a chance to expand, as Paralympians act as sporting role models for other potential athletes. This remains a contentious issue that will continue to generate conflict within the Paralympic field as members of the athlete sub-field find themselves being

divided into those who can and those who cannot compete at the Paralympic Games, on the basis of decisions made by the IPC sub-field, but also directly and indirectly affected by other sub-fields within the Paralympic field.

Issues surrounding attempts to provide small athlete populations opportunities to compete at Paralympic Games are exasperated by other factors highlighted by interviewees. Specifically, interviewees perceived there was an over-emphasis on Paralympic sport among national disability sport organisations and furthermore NPCs appeared overly pre-occupied with winning medals.

Firstly, many interviewees perceived there was too much emphasis on Paralympic sport, with other disability sport events marginalised or seemingly non-existent. For example, Cameron argued: “too much in disability sport is just about the Paralympic teams”. The issue of which events are included the Paralympic Games is intensified with disability sport provision heavily centred on Paralympic sports. Being a Paralympic event can have a significant impact upon the development of a disability sport as emphasised by Barry:

because [at the Paralympic Games] you're only offering a sample of that sport you distort the growth, because the sample you offer is the mirror nations use to look at their own disability programmes. 'There's no point in doing that, I can't put someone on funding if their event isn't going to happen '. I could have a great 10,000 runner in amputees or something - waste of time if it's not there [at the Paralympic Games].

Making disability sport events only appear worthwhile if practised at the Paralympic Games sets a dangerous precedent undermining participation among some already limited small athlete populations. If Paralympic sport alone possesses the opportunity to access the symbolic capital that comes from the status and prestige of being perceived as an elite sportsman with a disability, this could deter individuals from competing in disability sport events not shown at the Paralympic Games. By choosing to compete in a non-Paralympic sport, an individual with an impairment may attain the social and cultural capital that can be gained through undertaking sports participation. However, this cultural capital may not be able to generate subsequent

symbolic capital as the individual fails to identify as an elite athlete with a disability vis-a-vis as a Paralympian. This is a predicament viewed as inappropriate by Connor: "It would be the wrong way round to say... 'If you're a T35 CP runner there isn't a Paralympic 100metres so there's no point in being a 100metre runner'".

The importance attached to a Paralympic event is partly reflected as Paralympians receive funding which helps contribute to the costs of training and competing as a full-time athlete. Receipt of this economic capital may signify to certain individuals that some Paralympians are legitimately elite athletes as sport is their profession, with people willing to pay for some of them to achieve sporting excellence. In this respect economic capital is able to be transferred into symbolic capital. Yet this economic capital, in the form of funding, is far from secure and relies, not only on the athletes training and performance but the decisions taken by those in the IPC sub-field regarding which events will be included in upcoming Paralympic Games, as outlined by Patrick: "the key thing today is not about funding it's about investment. So the sport is investing in you as an individual to perform. End of story. For people who don't perform they're off...if there's no [Paralympic] event then there's no funding". If an event is included, and later combined, this can also impact on a prospective Paralympian's funding, as Patrick commented:

If it came to the Paralympic Games in London and there was going to be a combined class in 100metres, but that athlete was being funded in a single disability event and was probably odds on in that single disability event, but for whatever circumstances the entries hadn't come in or the times hadn't been achieved by athletes and so it's a combined class and athlete 'A' rather than being odds on for a gold is now probably 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> would they still maintain funding, yeah, but there would have to be some reflection as to what level.

Thus combining of events, while in theory may be considered pragmatic for including more events, can impact upon athletes' medal chances and income. The importance of medals in defining what resources elite athletes with a disability are given is an important issue both for athletes and disability sports administrators.

Some interviewees perceived there was an excessive concentration of resources on those impaired individuals deemed to possess potentially capital-rich bodies. Talking about the UK context, Patrick feared that a combination of the disproportionate importance attributed to Paralympic sport *and* winning Paralympic medals will have a negative effect on developing those athletes not eligible for Paralympic competition:

the worry for me...where the national sports federation has taken responsibility for the sport like here, UK Athletics is taking responsibility now, is that their focus is on elite sport and therefore the competitions they stage, the training programmes in place, are all about athletes who can go to the Paralympics, because the Paralympics is the only place that really matters - their funding comes from how many medals they get at the Paralympics, so their focus is solely on that.

The desire for elite athlete production, without broad grassroots participation, appears logical as participation pyramids in Paralympic sport are often very narrow. As Barry states: "I always think of Paralympic sport as one of these tomato plants or something that has been induced under hot house conditions to grow very, very tall so you have a great elevation but you don't have a broad base". However Barry also argued the fundamental mistake in only sending potential medal winners, as if all countries did this there would not be an event:

If I were talking to the Germans they'd say we won't send them [athletes] if we don't think they'll finish in the first 3 and we [UK] won't send anybody [who isn't a medal hope]. So if everyone gets as smart as us there will only be three people there, the one who's going to get gold, the one [who's going to get silver, the one who's going to get bronze] maybe four, and because there's only four there, the event will be cancelled.

The potential impact of not sending athletes considered unlikely to win a medal could have significantly re-shaped British Paralympic history, as Cameron outlined for example: "other countries could have turned round and not sent athletes and Tanni [Grey-Thompson] would not have been the champion she was".

The privileging of certain bodies within the Paralympic field extends beyond the clear dichotomy of Paralympic medal winners and mere Paralympians. The impact of social perceptions concerning the suitability for particular impaired bodies to compete at an elite disability sport competition (Deal, 2003; Mastro et al. 1996) is highly influential when staging the Paralympic Games and will now be discussed.

#### A hierarchy of impairments within the Paralympic Field?

The perception of disabled people, including Paralympians, being a heterogeneous group of differently impaired bodies was apparent to interviewees. This was particularly significant when discussing the demands placed upon impaired bodies to identify as elite athletes with a disability.

Individuals with an impairment are too often viewed as homogeneous often clustered under the labels of 'the disabled' and/or 'disabled people' (Sherrill and Williams, 1996). This simplifies and generalises understandings of disability, providing misleading and inaccurate perceptions of impairment. To perceive the Paralympic Games as a sports competition *for disabled people* risks oversimplifying our understanding of the Paralympic field. The Paralympic Games are a purportedly elite disability sporting competition that allows *specific* individuals with *particular* impairments to compete in *certain* sports.

The consensual and conflicting relationships between different disability groups within the Paralympic field were intensely discussed with interviewees. Through appreciating the specific influences of different impairments in the Paralympic field, I could begin to analyse interviewee comments relating to the possibility of a *hierarchy of impairments* (Ashton-Shaeffer et. al. 2001; Deal, 2003; Mastro et. al. 1996) within the Paralympic field. The existence of a hierarchy of impairments within the Paralympic field was perceived as a real threat by Daniel, because the wheelchair, and hence wheelchair users, are used as the archetypal symbol to represent disability: “the danger is there is a hierarchy of impairments out there and at the top of that hierarchy is largely people in wheelchairs...the international symbol for accessibility and so on is a wheelchair”.

The current hierarchy of impairment groups within the Paralympic field was articulated by Barry as partly a consequence of the historical development of the Paralympic Movement:

It's [Paralympic Games] an historically derived set of recognised Paralympic categories....more or less you've got a range of physical disabilities, whether its cerebral palsy or the different kinds of amputation or limb impairment. Beyond that we know there's lots of other degrees of disability but just because historically they didn't organise themselves as practitioners of sport and try to regulate their practice and were not there at the founding of the movement, so they did not create organisations which proved their viability.

The different types of impaired bodies permitted entry to the Paralympic Games has influenced the perceived legitimacy of certain impaired bodies to identify as viable vehicles with which to represent elite sporting competition, as exhibited at the Paralympic Games.

When discussing the perceived willingness to accept athletes from different disability groups into the Paralympic field, Dennis, pertinently described the fractured nature of 'the disabled': "In [19]48, this [development of Paralympic sport] is how it happened, there were individuals and tribalism. And tribalism is the different disabilities". Hence, individuals with an impairment are articulated as members of disability specific tribes each arguably endowed with their own capabilities of acquiring and trading capital. At times these tribes could combine against a common enemy, for example against perceived disability discrimination (Oliver, 1990). In this regard, Sam perceived Paralympians need to see the commonality between themselves, rather than their differences:

Over a short period of time, I began to realise disabled people from different impairment groups have a lot in common...we're discriminated against...The fact that our impairments are slightly different shouldn't really matter, we should support each other.

However, this habitus is not always shared, as apparent in-fighting between disability tribes for finite capital within the Paralympic field can break out (Bourdieu, 1993).



Sam articulated his experience of apparent tribal warfare while he was an athlete within the Paralympic field:

wheelchair athletes from track and field were angry, livid with the fact that athletes with cerebral palsy were involved in large numbers. They hated it, they literally hated it and they kept themselves to themselves.

Sam referred back to tribal identity when outlining why he felt this animosity existed:

Obviously you have an affinity with your own particular impairment group, which you can't get away from. Someone once described it to me, he called it tribal... A lot of my closest friends were amputees and they were my closest friends on the team because we'd been through similar situations...becoming disabled people and all those things we went through, we could identify with and talk through.

The sharing of cultural capital, in the form of their personal experiences and physical identities becomes a source of cohesion *and* division within and between disability groups.

Potential conflict between disability groups within the Paralympic field was extensively discussed with interviewees; broadly centring on two categories of athlete. Firstly, the perceived suitability of including athletes with an intellectual impairment to the Paralympic Games was discussed. Secondly, there was debate as to the suitability of some athletes with physical impairments to present sporting performances conducive to an elite disability sport competition such as the Paralympic Games. These topics will now be considered in turn.

#### Athletes with intellectual impairments and the Paralympic Games

Intellectually disabled athletes (ID athletes) have been barred from the Paralympic Games since Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games (Bailey, 2008). I would argue it was fortuitous that the interview process was conducted prior to the IPC's decision, made public on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009 (IPC, 2009a), to re-include athletes with an intellectual impairment at the 2012 London

Paralympic Games. By talking to interviewees at this time I was able to access individual opinions regarding the inclusion of ID athletes to the Paralympic Games, opposed to interviewees merely reiterating the logic of argument applied by the IPC.

The tension between individuals with an intellectual impairment<sup>45</sup> and other impaired bodies was argued by Cameron to have been a long running issue: “Physical impairment groups have always shied away more from learning disabilities from the stigma of 'does he take sugar?’” Hence the social stigma attached to intellectual disabilities is identified as a barrier to social interaction, even outside of a sporting environment. Within the Paralympic Games, Dennis highlighted the dominance of wheelchair athletes and their distaste for ID athletes, stating:

'Paras' [Paraplegic wheelchair users] were always the most critical and elitist. They never wanted the LDs [learning disabled athletes] in the Paralympics. So as soon as the LDs tripped up in Sydney [2000 Paralympic Games], they were out. That was an excuse [to remove ID athletes from the Paralympic Games].

Dennis uses IPC's reaction to INAS-FID's failure to have a robust classification system at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games (Bailey, 2008) to illustrate a deep-seated desire by individuals with physical impairments to remove intellectually impaired athletes from the Paralympic Games. Sam suggested athletes with physical impairments wished to distance themselves from socially stigmatised ID athletes:

They [some athletes] just didn't see that those [intellectually disabled] people had anything in common with them at all and that was particularly prevalent again particularly among the wheelchair racers; 'we've just convinced the world we haven't got learning difficulties and now these people are going to be competing with us.' They just didn't like the idea of being associated with people with learning difficulties.

Hence, the potential exchange of cultural capital into symbolic capital for being viewed as an elite athlete with a disability, is viewed to be diminished if ID athletes are seen as part of the Paralympic athlete sub-field. Protection of

one's own social identity and sport following the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games was also identified as a source of tension by Cameron:

the impact of people screwing up their [ID athletes] classification system affects every other group. Infact a physio[-therapist] from a local rugby union team came to me and said 'aren't you [wheelchair basketball] the sport with all those cheats from Spain?!' So that still affects...people still see disability as disability, not as 'that person uses a wheelchair', it's the sport that is affected.

Some interviewees justified the desire for athletes without intellectual impairments to be distanced from ID athletes because Paralympic sport was elite disability sport. For some members of the Paralympic field, ID athletes failed to embody and display what individuals perceived Paralympic sport represented. Michelle stated:

it's tough for me to understand how intellectual disabilities fit into what I see the Paralympic Movement representing or what I think the Paralympic Movement should represent which is physical impairment and I guess sensory too with the visual impairments...the ID athletes that took part [at Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games]...were highly functioning swimmers that you probably wouldn't guess, until you started talking to them, that they had an intellectual disability.

The need for Paralympians to identify as impaired *bodies* operating within a sporting context was an issue for other Paralympians. According to Sam:

they [some wheelchair athletes] didn't see these people as disabled. They would see an athlete, who to all intents and purposes in their eyes is a non-disabled person who has a learning difficulty and then say 'why doesn't that person go and compete in the Olympics' which is a valid point to some extent, because physically they might be the same.

Sam is articulating a belief that sporting performance is not significantly affected by intellectual impairment. This assertion obscures the notion of ID athletes being discriminated by other disability groups, by calling for ID athletes to compete at the Olympic Games where all other athletes, without a physical and sensory impairment, endeavour to compete.

The impact of intellectual capacity upon sporting performance was considered significant in justifying the inclusion of ID athletes in the Paralympic Games by interviewees. The required level of intellectual impairment to justify inclusion in the Paralympic Games was considered alongside the relevance of intellectual capacity in closed sports, by Dennis stating: “In Sydney [2000 Paralympic Games] they used 75 IQ. I think you've got to drop it to 65, that's when you're learning disabled, because a lot of these events that they participate in are closed sports. You don't need intellect for closed sports, you run as fast as you can, you swim as fast as you can”. Daniel provided a paradoxical argument regarding the inclusion of ID athletes within the Paralympic Games. He stated that if intellectual impairment limits athletic performance, this diminished level of athletic performance would prevent ID athletes being suitable representatives of Paralympic sport. Daniel argued: “I think that if you're going for the most intellectually challenged, the amount of training they do and so on is not conducive with being a Paralympic athlete, with being an elite performer.” Thus, ID athletes appear subject to insurmountable opposition as they are viewed as either too impaired, or not impaired enough, to warrant inclusion in the Paralympic Games. According to the dataset, tension between disability groups within the Paralympic field also existed between athletes with different physical impairments and will now be discussed.

#### Athletes with physical impairments and the Paralympic Games

Some interviewees perceived that certain athletes within the Paralympic Games may be more lucrative, than others (Abberley, 1996; Bertling and Schierl, 2008) in terms of the capital they yield for other members of the Paralympic field. The differential perceptions regarding the suitability and worth of athletes with a range of physical impairments were discussed during interviews. Specifically, interviewees emphasised issues surrounding the social reception of athletes with CP, as well as those individuals with more severe levels of impairment included in the Paralympic field.

### *Athletes with Cerebral Palsy*

During interview, athletes with CP were perceived to be the physical disability group whose athletic performances were particularly problematic in the promotion and display of Paralympic sport. Sam recollected how he believed a 1990s marketing video produced by BPA intentionally excluded cerebral palsy athletes:

*Sam:* I just thought it [the selection of people used in the BPA marketing video] wasn't an accurate reflection of what the Paralympics is all about. It was mainly just amputees and I thought they should have used a further spread. I got the impression that the BPA were at that particular time particularly reluctant to use athletes with cerebral palsy.

*Interviewer:* Why do you feel that was?

*Sam:* I got the impression that they felt uncomfortable. People with cerebral palsy perhaps may have trouble making what would be considered, if I can use the word 'normal', facial expressions and things like that.

Hence, Sam argues the corporeal mannerisms of athletes with CP were deemed to conflict with the image of Paralympic sport that the BPA wished to promote. I posed this issue to Trevor who had played a role in creating the aforementioned video:

*Interviewer:* ...some may say there is an absence of individuals with severe impairments [in the aforementioned BPA video]. So you mainly had amputee athletes...

*Trevor:* Wheelchair, blind, yes. It's difficult. I think it's changed. I think we are seeing more athletes with cerebral palsy, with more severe cerebral palsy, but it is a very difficult image to get press and video and all the rest of the media to understand

Hence, Trevor appears to be expressing perceived conflict between desires to portray individuals with CP as credible athletes and the media sub-field's interpretation and portrayal of elite athletic performance. However, the BPA and other members of the IPC sub-field inevitably share responsibility, along with the media sub-field, for any marginalisation of athletes with CP. If the IPC sub-field provided more athletes with CP to be used by the media sub-

field it may alter the social reception of these impaired bodies as viable and credible examples of elite sport. Alternatively, the level of coverage afforded to Paralympic sport may diminish as the media sub-field fails to appreciate and promote impaired bodies which they feel lack the credibility and symbolic capital akin to being identifiable as an elite athlete. The media and sponsorship sub-fields inevitably function outside of the Paralympic field as well and as such can be seen to operate even if they removed themselves from the Paralympic field. However, loss of the media sub-field from the Paralympic field would arguably dramatically alter the ability of the IPC sub-field to market and promote the Paralympic Games. I would suggest the media and sponsorship sub-fields are dominant over the IPC sub-field hence dissuading the IPC sub-field from taking a significant risk in pushing athletes with CP to the forefront to try to attract increased media attention. The perception that athletes with CP were incompatible with the media and sponsorship sub-field's perceptions of what constitutes as marketable athletes (Abberley, 1996) was also interpreted by Patrick in the context of athletics:

Within track and field, if I'm honest I don't think they [athletes with CP] get the recognition, it tends to be wheelchair track, it tends to be amputees, because they may well be perceived in the marketing manner more favourable. When you've got somebody in a chair and it's colourful, flashy, they're in the gear, somebody who is wearing an up-to-date prosthetic leg looks the part. Somebody who's got cerebral palsy probably looks uncoordinated, is uncoordinated, probably has not got the mannerisms to be marketed.

Issues surrounding attempts to have athletes with CP recognised as elite athletes with a disability were also apparent to Graeme in the context of Para-cycling. Graeme, an able-bodied academic researcher who worked with the British Para-cycling team to help improve their performances at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, stated:

it's a little bit of a problem getting the severe cerebral palsy to be seen as competitive. So whether it's coaches or helpers turning that person who rides the bike into an elite sportsman,

having that approach. It's that kind of an issue and maybe even some of the people who look after the severe cerebral palsy being inclined to not push the person as much as they could, there's some of that going on.

Here Graeme is suggesting that while spectators may not perceive cerebral palsy cyclists to be representative as elite sportsmen/women, it is possible the habitus of those who assist individuals with severe cerebral palsy possess a reluctance to push them to intensively train and compete. Instead there is a wish to facilitate or help, thus a more passive and care-centred approach is taken toward the individual with severe cerebral palsy, arguably contrary to the self-sacrificing lifestyle required to become an elite athlete.

The impact of the impairment upon the technical capabilities of the cyclist with severe cerebral palsy may also be a reason why these individuals' performances are perceived as marginal by the habitus of those in the media sub-field. One consequence of the physical capabilities of a cyclist with severe cerebral palsy is that the course on which they compete has to be less technically demanding. If the course is not adapted for athletes with severe cerebral palsy then these athletes cannot compete alongside other disability groups. As Graeme mentions:

Some of it is a logistics thing. They just can't put the events [for cyclists with severe cerebral palsy] on because maybe the courses are too technical or they have to make the course less technical for someone who has got severe cerebral palsy and is in a trike; there's a limit to how much of an incline you can have on a course.

This difference in course may be judged by spectators as a lesser challenge and devalue the perceived sporting prowess of a cyclist with severe cerebral palsy. Alternatively, if cyclists with severe cerebral palsy cannot compete at the same venues as other cyclists, this further differentiates their perceived sporting prowess, with their achievements being unseen and/or marginalised to a different venue or time. This separation of severely impaired athletes, in this instance those with severe cerebral palsy, from other Paralympians would undermine the cultural capital shared between Paralympians as some athletes become differentiated and perceived as inferior examples of

Paralympic athletes. Again the tension exists between finding a balance within the Paralympic field between the demands of the sport, ensuring it is sufficiently challenging and facilitates high level performances, but not so challenging that the demands of the sport are insurmountable because of the affect of someone's impairment. Boccia is an example of a Paralympic sport which arguably aims to allow the abilities of individuals with severe cerebral palsy to be expressed within a sporting environment in which it is hoped skill, rather than impairment, is the key focus. The feasibility of achieving this perception will now be discussed.

### *Boccia*

Individuals with severe cerebral palsy are centre stage in boccia. In many respects how boccia is perceived and received has arguably become viewed as a synonym for perceptions of all athletes with severe disabilities within the Paralympic field. This is largely because of a lack of athletes with severe cerebral palsy competing in other sports. As Patrick suggests: "apart from boccia, the more severe end of disability sport has been squeezed. I mean at one time there were more events in for severe disability in track and field, those events have gone." Donald concurs:

*Interviewer:* Do you think there's a possible tension or issue for athletes with severe disabilities, as arguably some may question whether they are 'elite' athletes?

*Donald:* Yes, I think that's happening, if it hasn't happened already. Looking at the media coverage, it seems to me that I've never seen an athlete with severe cerebral palsy performing, unless it's a very, very short snippet of them playing Boccia or something like that.

Hence, boccia can be seen to serve as a rare stage for athletes' with severe cerebral palsy. To exclude boccia from the Paralympic Games would arguably be interpreted as a desire to remove severely impaired individuals from the Paralympic field. In Jerry's opinion: "for me if they are going to cut, say boccia out, or something like that, they need to find something else for them, they can't just drop them and say that's it. Boccia's there and it serves



a purpose for whoever plays it". Barry perceives boccia's status, as allegedly one of the last domains in which severely impaired individuals can compete at the Paralympic Games, to seemingly protect boccia from removal:

*Interviewer:* Do you think athletes with severe disabilities will become sidelined from the Paralympics Games?

*Barry:* They are becoming sidelined but there's no way they can probably kick out boccia

However, the inclusion in the Paralympic Games does not instantly translate boccia into being perceived as an elite disability sport played by *athletes* with a disability. Pdraig perceived the initial justification for including boccia into the Paralympic Games was based on inclusion, not sporting, reasons: "my understanding was that boccia was brought in because there were too many of the dynamic sports like swimming, like wheelchair basketball and wheelchair athletics, that your less mobile athletes would be missing out, so boccia was brought in to make the Paralympics more inclusive." If the reasons for including boccia in the Paralympic Games remain focussed on notions of inclusion, and not an acceptance that boccia players are competing in an elite sport, this inevitably creates problems in the perceived legitimacy of continuing to include boccia within the Paralympic Games.

Other interviewees expressed tensions concerning the perception of boccia players as elite athletes. Jack called for a sport-specific differentiated definition of an elite athlete:

for them [boccia players] it's a skill sport...and I've seen the skill, from the physical capabilities they've got it is amazing what they can do and achieve. Is it comparable? well look at the two sports of wheelchair rugby and wheelchair basketball as well, are those two sports comparable or are they different due to the levels of disability? So it depends who's looking at it and through who's eyes and what you're trying to portray.

Thus Jack is reiterating the need for individual habitus to make sophisticated distinctions between what constitutes elite sporting performance in different disability sports. Pdraig chooses to explain the perceived differences,

between boccia and wheelchair basketball, as akin to the perceived differences between relatively static and dynamic able-bodied sports:

with boccia, which is for the more severely disabled it's not so exciting, it's not so dynamic, whereas wheelchair basketball is a much faster pace and more dynamic and exhilarating and much more like it, the same with sport generally; football and rugby get higher audiences than bowls, it's all very much linked in that respect.

In doing so Padraig privileges those sports that he perceives, through his habitus, to be representative of his interpretation of what sport is really about, namely dynamic contests based on physical muscular prowess. This definition of sport is arguably at odds with many of the attributes of boccia which emphasises skill rather than physical, muscular prowess. Yet Michelle highlighted the failure of boccia players to be identified as *athletes* with a disability being culpable, not the nature of the sport, for the marginalisation of boccia at the Paralympic Games:

there were definitely a few comments made about the boccia players, you know 'they don't look like athletes' and I think that is a lack of knowledge, ignorance...One of the guys from another sport, made an off-hand comment and I sort of challenged him about it. I don't think I really changed his mind on it.

Attempting to overcome this, Michelle identified moves taken towards making the lifestyles of boccia players more conducive to the perceived lifestyle of an athlete: "Canadian CP sport, who have organisational control over boccia, they're working towards making it more professional and having training plans and strength and conditioning coaches and all that stuff towards legitimising it". The likelihood of this athletic lifestyle being perceived as a rite of passage for boccia players to then be accepted as elite athletes is, according to Michelle, still at risk due to the fundamental need for boccia players to be assisted: "boccia players always have attendants with them. So does that threaten some sense of autonomy by other athletes?" In other words, does this assistance negate boccia players and other athletes with high support needs being perceived as elite athletes with a disability? If so it further

jeopardises the position of athletes with high support needs within the Paralympic Games (IPC, 2010c).

### *Athletes with severe impairments*

Athletes within the Paralympic Field with arguably the most severe impairments have been assisted by the AHSNC (IPC, 2010c). The utility of the AHSNC was questioned by Connor:

I don't think it's [AHSNC] had any value at all because they [AHSNC] can make comments about what their feelings are but you've got to accept that sport is responsible for sport and it depends who is running the sport...we [an IPC sport] didn't really need another committee to tell us what was the right way to do things...Now if you didn't have that group of people running the sport who understand disability then there might be a place for that group, but having given advice would they [AHSNC] be listened to, because the people running the sport have their own view of what the sport is.

This rebuke of the AHSNC can be interpreted in several ways. Firstly, that those disability sport administrators who understand disability do not require assistance in how to include athletes with high support needs into their sport as they are aware of how to achieve this. Secondly, interpreting AHSNC as without value may stem from a desire by disability sport administrators to be left to run their sports as *they* see fit. The advisory role of the AHSNC is just that, it is advice, not a binding mandate. Some perceived weaknesses of AHSNC may stem from a belief that the core ideological desire of the Paralympic Movement (to be viewed as a platform to showcase elite performances by athletes with a disability) is contrary to the sporting images displayed by athletes with high support needs. Interviewees commented on how they perceived severe impairment to impact upon the social reception of performances by athletes with high support needs. Daniel admitted: "there is always a difficulty and the general public may have difficulty seeing the ability, and I do at times, I'm not saying I don't at times, seeing the ability in someone who has high support needs".

Teresa felt that her performances were deemed inferior because of the severity of her impairment. Teresa argued her impairment, twinned with the

limited distance which her lower class of swimmer was permitted to swim, combined to present what some may perceive as a less valuable display of sporting performance:

I always felt those of us below class 5<sup>46</sup> were always seen as though it's much easier for us to get medals, we didn't have to swim as far and our medals were somehow less valuable. I never felt that, and those of us in those classes never felt that but you could certainly feel it, sometimes from other swimmers, sometimes from the people [watching].

This perceived lack of symbolic capital in lower class, more severely impaired, swimmers arguably stems from their perceived inability to be recognised as legitimate elite athletes. Thus, the inclusion of severely impaired athletes within the Paralympic Games perhaps appears vulnerable, especially when considering the economic capital that severely impaired athletes are perceived to generate through their performances (see Brittain, 2010:120-121). In this regard Teresa states:

It's expensive for people with my level of impairment to travel, because in many respects we'll need people to come with us and support us, so that's another person on the aeroplane, another person to pay for and I think there is a best value thing going on. You have a group of people, and okay this is the success they're going to have. What is the cost that is attached to that? How can we deliver that in the most cost effective way, actually it's to have groups of athletes who don't require additional support...and that worries me for the future of Paralympic sport, because for me, the whole point of Paralympic sport was to really generate some huge diversity and that I think is being chipped away at as the big sponsors become more involved.

While the sponsorship sub-field is highlighted, the pursuit of many forms of capital and subsequent profits is arguably endemic among all of the sub-fields that combine to constitute the Paralympic field. Individuals and groups are arguably motivated to achieve profits, no matter what capital they are trading in, be that economic, social or cultural (Bourdieu, 1977). Throughout discussions with interviewees the prominence and importance of the media sub-field in influencing which physically impaired bodies from the athlete sub-

field are included and shown at the Paralympic Games was frequently expressed. As such the role of the media sub-field in shaping how the Paralympic Games are organized and presented will now be discussed.

### The role of the Media sub-field

The cultural significance of the media sport inter-relationship has been documented (Rowe, 1999; Stead, 2003) including analysis into the cultural impact of media coverage of the Olympic Games (Spa et. al., 1995). While there exists a long history of (able-bodied) sports being reported by media outlets (Maguire et al., 2002; Rowe, 1999) disability sport, including Paralympic sport, has failed to receive the same level of interest from media organisations (Nixon, 2007). In January 2010, IPC proudly reported that the London 2012 Paralympic Games will be receiving 150 hours coverage within the UK from the Channel 4, the host broadcaster (IPC, 2010j). This is considerably less than the host broadcaster of the London 2012 Olympic Games, the BBC, who aims to show every Olympic event 'live' across a range of media platforms (BBC, 2008b). Based on previous Paralympic media coverage some have argue certain Paralympians have been prioritised and utilised more by the media (Schell and Rodriguez, 2001; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008; Thomas and Smith, 2009). This has arguably led to significantly different interpretations of the perceived compatibility of certain impaired bodies to be credible elite athletes with a disability, although content analysis of media output is unable to provide evidence of how media articles were actually interpreted. However, this research seems to support assertions and concern that: “in many societies – particularly in Western societies – the media coverage of disability sport has tended to focus on *particular athletes, with particular impairments, competing in particular sports.*”(Thomas and Smith, 2009:151; italics in original). For example, Sam emphasised the apparent complicity of the BPA in providing the media sub-field with individuals perceived to be *acceptable* examples of Paralympic sportsmen/women:

BPA were hand picking the people to be interviewed by her [BPA promoter prior to 1992 Paralympic Games] and they weren't picking certain people. We were asking 'well why don't you pick athletes with cerebral palsy? Why don't you pick people who are more severely disabled? because that's an accurate reflection of the Paralympics. But they seemed to go for people who seemed to be relatively articulate and would say the right things. There were definitely some people there they were avoiding using.

Interviewees perceived the media sub-field demanded IPC and athlete sub-fields to produce sporting products that possessed specific attributes deemed conducive to identifying the Paralympic Games as a credible example of elite disability sport. Paul felt demands for wheelchair racing to be 'televisual' had led to athletes deemed unattractive to the media being removed: "they've chopped those people at the high level of disabilities, there aren't so many people competing and the level of performance that you would look at, the perception would be its not televisual, and it's not attractive for people to see, so they'd much rather keep it, in the end, just one open class of wheelchair racing". Jack argued even though two athletes may have achieved similarly impressive performances at consecutive Paralympic Games, if an athlete has a 'communication problem', they will receive less media coverage:

it's hard for someone like Dave Roberts who's just equalled Tanni's record of Gold medals, he doesn't get the same level of recognition, why, because he's got a communication problem. To me he's achieved just as much, if not more, but because he doesn't come across nice and hasn't got the right words to say, that to me is infuriating.

Jack perceived some tensions, surrounding greater exposure of some impairment groups over others, to emanate from the inherent heterogeneous nature of disability and arguably issues surrounding 'disability correctness' (Shakespeare, 2006). Jack argued: "you're never going to have one athlete that will represent everyone and to try and be politically correct about it would be the wrong thing as well, and I think people who are disabled shouldn't get so petty about it". Yet, what to Jack may seem insignificant, to others within

the Paralympic field, may be considered as highly influential as the acceptability of certain athletic bodies becomes transmuted into the provision of sports and events within the Paralympic Games. The role of aesthetics in privileging certain Paralympic bodies will now be discussed.

### Aesthetically pleasing Paralympians

Some interviewees believed athletes with a disability were subject to a form of media-orientated body fascism (Abberley, 1996; Bertling and Schierl, 2008) as some athletes with a disability were considered more aesthetically pleasing when competing than others.

The definition of *aesthetically pleasing*, when referring to Paralympic sporting performances, is subjective and thus difficult to define (Bertling and Schierl, 2008; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Hughes, 1999; Stone, 1995; Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). I would argue aesthetically pleasing sporting performances are often those that represent purposeful, controlled bodily movement in a manner displaying speed, endurance, strength and/or high levels of skill in the achievement of sport specific excellence. For interviewees, aspects of this broad definition were conducive with their interpretations of aesthetically pleasing performances. Donald stated:

wheelchair athletes see themselves at the top of the Paralympic Movement and amputees and then I would say visual impairment and athletes with cerebral palsy, and particularly those with severe cerebral palsy are two steps below that top. I think that comes back to how aesthetically pleasing the athletes are when competing

In Teresa's experience the importance of aesthetically pleasing sporting performance was integral to defining the value of lower class swimmers' performances:

swimmers who had less obvious impairments were much more the darlings of the media...those of us who had quite significant impairments, although we were extremely successful medal-wise, which is what it was all about, we were kind of pushed to the side...there was much less value placed on those of us with more significant impairment opposed to the much greater value

that was placed on those swimmers who society would consider to be more aesthetically pleasing.

The perceived need for the IPC and media sub-fields to portray Paralympic sport as representative of elite sport was expressed by Paul: “people are looking for achievements that they can relate to, so they want to see the best athletes doing the sort of performances you can relate to Olympic athletes, so the athletes at the higher level of disability or the less visually attractive ones maybe are beginning to drop off the bottom”.

Amongst interviewees it was perceived that Paralympic performances adjudged similar to able-bodied sporting performances were highly prized. Michelle believed swimming races with higher class swimmers, by involving bodies that look more like able-bodied swimmers, were more appealing to the sponsorship and media sub-fields: “I think it's [higher compared to lower class swimming contests] probably more marketable and the times are a lot quicker and other people can say 'that looks like what we think a swimming race should look like'”. The perceived appeal to the media sub-field of sportsmen/women with a disability who can be presented as similar to able-bodied athletes was reinforced by Pdraig: “I do think your less disabled get more publicity and I guess that's because it's a little more closer to the mainstream sport. Your more disabled means your sport has to be more adapted for the athlete, it's a further distance away from the traditional game”. The notion of capital emanating from those bodies that can identify as models of elite sporting performance was notable in Donald's reasoning behind the acceptance of wheelchair basketball as an elite sport:

The athletes you often see are less disabled and operating at a higher level...You know [wheelchair] basketball, where I think people can make that link 'oh yeah I understand that'. They can't move their legs but the rest of their body is fine and the big muscles of their upper body and all of that fits into what people identify with being sportsmen.

Hence, the physical prowess of wheelchair basketball players allows them to access the symbolic capital afforded to elite athletes.



The importance of Paralympic sports being 'exciting' (McCann, 1996) and thus marketable to the media and sponsorship sub-fields was most apparent when talking about wheelchair basketball played at the Paralympic Games. Abigail stated:

The beauty of wheelchair basketball is it's an exciting game to watch, and it's very easy to market as the rules aren't difficult to pick up, people watching it still see a round ball going in a round hoop at the end of the court, with a little bit more excitement in between with the crashes and the bangs, so that's quite an easy sport for people to watch, whereas some of the other sports have got some weird and wacky rules that are just impossible to understand unless you know the sport.

The perceived importance of presenting Paralympic sport so it is deemed acceptable to the media and sponsorship subfields was emphasised by Abigail: "I think people do see that disability thing first and getting people to see that sport first is the thing I struggle with for things like sponsors who aren't that interested in looking at disabled athletes, they still want the glamour and they don't want somebody who doesn't work properly". Provocatively Abigail can be seen to be re-affirming the importance of aesthetics (DePauw and Gavron, 2005) with reference to the sponsorship sub-field. I believe sporting performances of athletes with severe impairments are the most problematic when attempting to accrue capital that stems from being perceived and presented as credible elite disability sportsmen/women by the media and sponsorship sub-fields.

#### *The Acceptable Paralympian at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games*

Issues of corporeal acceptability and the desire for and use of aesthetically pleasing sporting bodies within the Paralympic field (Bertling and Schierl, 2008) were apparent among some interviewees following the 2008 Paralympic Games.

Some individuals perceived Eleanor Symmonds, at the time of the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games a 13 year old, female dwarf Paralympic swimmer, had received a disproportionate amount of media attention in the United Kingdom both at and following the 2008 Paralympic Games. It was felt

by some interviewees that this was because she was considered to be an aesthetically pleasing and acceptable face for the Paralympic athlete sub-field. For example, Nathan commented:

I almost felt that she [Symmonds] was an acceptable face of disabled people. They're [dwarf athletes] not the drooling person with cerebral palsy and spasm or the somebody with profound learning difficulties or so on, and it almost creates 'well this [Symmonds] is an ideal disabled person who can do that. Now what about these poor disabled people who can't do that'. I don't think that's the fault of the Paralympic Movement, but it's the other pressures that get placed on it.

Nathan can be interpreted here to be referring to the demands of the media and sponsorship sub-fields and desires of the IPC sub-field to secure greater capital, both economic and symbolic, from Paralympians' performances. Jack felt that it was Symmonds' appeal to the media sub-field, rather than her sporting achievement per se, that had been influential in creating the attention she has received: "we come to Beijing and the biggest story we've got is that young girl who's small [Symmonds] who's crying, to me that isn't a great sports story just because she happened to catch the attention of the media...because she's got TV appeal". Dennis also felt Symmonds' sporting achievements were subordinate to a broader privileging of certain groups of impaired bodies over others: "I can't believe it, that is an example [British media coverage of Symmonds post 2008 Paralympic Games] of how this has gone absolutely haywire. I don't understand it. You've got public reactions; the cutie syndrome I call it. The kid cutie syndrome. To the extent she gets an OBE, they give her all these things, and she's only 14, 13". Hence, some adjudge Symmonds to represent an acceptable example of a Paralympian for both the media and sponsorship sub-fields, as well as members of the IPC sub-field who are willing to identify themselves with Symmonds and have her represent, particularly in Britain, Paralympic sport.

There are potentially multiple reasons behind an apparent disproportionate focus on Symmonds. Firstly, the importance of nationalism is apparent as Symmonds is a British Paralympic Gold medallist with which the British media can talk about Paralympic sport and national success at the

same time. Furthermore, Symmond's age means that she is also a useful tool for constructing articles about the upcoming London 2012 Paralympic Games at which it is anticipated Symmonds will compete and possibly medal. Thus, some commonality can be seen with the media coverage of young British diver Tom Daley, viewed as a potential medallist at 2012 Olympic Games (BBC, 2008c).

However, this discussion has illustrated the perceived importance that can be attributed to belonging to a particular disability group and competing in sport in a seemingly aesthetically pleasing style. Arguably the importance of aesthetics within the Paralympic field was perceived, by some, to have intensified as the Paralympic Games now seeks to be identified as a sporting spectacle.

#### Paralympic Games as a sporting spectacle

The role of spectacle in mediated-sport has been documented (see Crawford, 2004; Tomlinson, 2002). The need for the Paralympic Games to be a spectacle (Cashman and Darcy, 2008), an extraordinary exhibition of sporting achievement experienced by many people, was apparent to some members of the Paralympic field. Cameron stated the Paralympic Games was “a sporting spectacular, a fantastic competitive event to watch or take part in”. The importance of sporting events enthusing both athletes and spectators is being articulated here. Thus, Cameron emphasises the importance of Paralympic events functioning and being perceived as examples of elite sporting competition to both athletes and spectators. Athletes wish their performances to be considered elite thereby allowing the corresponding cultural and symbolic capital that derives from being viewed as a legitimate elite sportsman/woman to be accrued. Meanwhile for spectators to enjoy watching the Paralympic Games they arguably wish to observe an event which represents their impression of what elite disability sport should be.

Highlighting the importance of the media sub-field in shaping the organisation and presentation of the Paralympic Games Paul stated: “the Paralympics is entertainment, it’s part of the TV world now”. The perception

that the Paralympic Games is less about equitable sporting competition and more about the promotion of a sensationalised media product (Stead, 2003) was referred to by Paul, who stated: “my perception is it’s [Paralympic Games] a show, it needs to look good on TV, it’s a performance, it’s entertainment...the Paralympics is a four year TV spectacular”. To privilege mediated spectacle, above sporting competition is a subtle, but significant, act. This arguably intensifies, making obvious, the potential incompatibility of including certain athletes within the Paralympic Games. This became apparent when talking to Connor:

*Connor:* if you look at the Paralympics as a spectacle, which you've got to because it is the pinnacle of sport for people with a disability, it's also a spectacle. It's something people want to watch on the TV or go and see in the stadium. So if you accept both of those things as being true, then you have to find the balance between how much of a spectacle and how much of an elite disability competition it is...

*Interviewer:* Are you saying there's a tension between making it a spectacle and it being an elite disability competition?

*Connor:* Well, you've got to draw a line where elite comes in which is another argument that comes into disability sport

In this instance Connor is referring back to the aforementioned issue of which impaired bodies can or are perceived to identify as elite sportsmen with a disability. The importance of the impact of the media sub-field and the perceived correlation between heightened media interest arguably increasing the likely flow of economic capital from the sponsorship sub-field, was considered a significant issue among members from the Paralympic field.

For some interviewees the importance of pleasing Paralympic spectators, the majority of whom will be watching via media outlets, was perceived to be greater than meeting athletes' demands. The importance of deriving enjoyment from watching what you perceive to be exciting sport (McCann, 1996) was reflected on by Abigail: I think its [Paralympic Games] strengths are that certainly some of the sports are so exciting to watch, if you watch wheelchair rugby, wheelchair basketball, some of the athletics”. Yet

concerns over the inclusion of certain sports and/ or impairment groups resonating from focussing too much on the spectacular excitement is apparent when Abigail states: “there are other disability sports that don’t get seen...it’s just unfortunate that some of the disability sports aren’t that exciting to watch, so they’re probably not the easiest things to market and get people watching”. This issue of spectator excitement is especially significant given “contemporary sports find themselves competing for consumers in an increasingly overcrowded entertainment market, where the consumer now has far more variety to pick and choose from” (Crawford, 2004:82). Thus, the IPC sub-field, if to become financially self-sustaining, arguably must formulate and promote an elite disability sport competition which reflects spectators’ habitus and subsequent *entertainment* demands. It becomes problematic though as these desires can conflict with the wishes of competitors.

During discussion, I would interpret Michelle expressed a change in habitus as factors that were once significant to her as a Paralympian were no longer important when she was a spectator at the 2008 Paralympic Games. As a Paralympian, Michelle competed and wished to be recognised as an athlete (as discussed earlier). To facilitate her competition in the Paralympic Games she was in one of many classes. Without the differentiation of different classes she could not compete fairly with other swimmers. However, when Michelle was a spectator, the existence of these many classes was a frustration, as they generated many medal ceremonies:

*Interviewer:* Did it feel different being a spectator and watching the swimming races in Beijing [2008 Paralympic Games] than it had when competing in Sydney [2000 Paralympic Games]?

*Michelle:* Yeah, this is going to sound really bad but all the medal ceremonies. It just took so long to get through all the medal ceremonies. They'd have one race and then six medal ceremonies, so I think how frustrating it can be being there, it can get a bit tedious to go through ten medal presentations for one event.

The transition from one sub-field within the Paralympic field to another can be seen to have been significant for Michelle's habitus and subsequent desires for how Paralympic Games should be organised and presented.

There is a risk that a situation could occur whereby the 'tail is wagging the dog' as the vast capital resources of the media and sponsorship sub-fields dominate the Paralympic field. This causes the IPC sub-field to focus exclusively on this economic capital, and not on the athlete sub-field, who should be central in Paralympic decision-making. A situation which may have already been reached.

### Summary

This chapter has focused on how impairment impacts upon the organization and presentation of Paralympic Games. Firstly, some of the challenges faced when creating a Paralympic Games were considered. The topic of small athlete populations was widely discussed with interviewees, with this issue arguably exasperated by a disproportionate focus on the Paralympic Games, compared to other disability sport events. Some challenges created by small athlete populations among Paralympic athletes were perceived to have been intensified further through sporting organizations, including NPCs, being solely focussed on winning Paralympic medals.

Subsequently social perceptions of different disability groups and the perceived justification for including/excluding certain bodies with specific impairments from the Paralympic Games were discussed. Interviewees expressed their views on the inclusion of ID athletes in the Paralympic Games. Then there was debate on the suitability of including bodies with certain physical impairments. This discussion primarily focussed on athletes with CP and those with severe impairments. The impact of the media sub-field upon the inclusion of certain bodies in the Paralympic Games was significant and discussed in the context of aesthetics within disability sport and creation of the Paralympic Games as a sporting spectacle. Throughout, this chapter sought to highlight how social perceptions of impairment and notions of elite sport are expressed through the inter-relations of different

groups and sub-fields within the Paralympic field. Another sub-field of the Paralympic field, namely the IOC sub-field, was also deemed significant in the development and current functioning of the Paralympic field. The interaction of the IOC sub-field with the Paralympic field will now be discussed.

## **Findings and Discussion - Impact of IOC sub-field**

The relationship between the IOC and IPC has been documented (see Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2008, 2010; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998). During interview, individuals often referred to the actions and influence of the IOC and Olympic Games, upon Paralympic sport. I would argue both the IOC and Olympic Games are the main aspects of the IOC sub-field as it exists in the Paralympic field. Some interviewees emphasised the significance of the IOC in affecting the development and current manifestation of the Paralympic field. In doing so, interviewees inadvertently highlighted the importance of the IOC sub-field in shaping relations and events within the Paralympic field.

This chapter will appraise the impact of the IOC sub-field upon the Paralympic field, based on interviewee perceptions resonating from their habitus. This process will firstly consider what members of the Paralympic field perceived to be the benefits and issues of being associated with the IOC sub-field. Secondly, the similarities and differences between the Paralympic and Olympic Movements, as perceived by interviewees, will be outlined. The potential consequences of these disparities are then discussed.

### **Perceived benefits and issues emanating from IOC sub-field**

#### ***Benefits***

The interaction of the IOC sub-field with other sub-fields within the Paralympic field, was considered by some interviewees as beneficial to the development of the Paralympic Movement. Cameron and Trevor perceived the IPC-IOC marketing agreement (see Mason, 2002) to be a significant product of the IOC-IPC relationship. Cameron stated: "I think another big strength [for the IPC] is the combined marketing agreement and the agreement that whoever hosts the Olympics and Paralympics is the same host". Trevor labelled this IOC-IPC agreement to be an important juncture in the development of Paralympic sport: "[a] milestone was probably in 2000 when the IOC embraced the [Paralympic] Games fully for the first time and made it an obligation of a host city not just to put the [Paralympic] Games on, but to bid to put them [Paralympic Games] on as well". This IOC-IPC



agreement created an obligation for countries to have to bid for the Paralympic Games, if they wanted to host the Olympic Games (IPC, 2010iv). However, has this led to the Paralympic Games being valued by those bidding for the Olympic Games or are the Paralympic Games merely an obligation that is tolerated by those wanting to host the Olympic Games? It is important to consider the problematic production of economic, cultural, and symbolic profit from the purportedly elite sporting performances of athletes with a disability competing at the Paralympic Games (Hughes, 1999). Thus, even though organisations are seen to *bid* for the Paralympic Games; it is arguably the immense economic, cultural and symbolic capital resources of the IOC sub-field that are desired by potential Olympic and Paralympic hosts. Meanwhile the Paralympic Games are perhaps viewed as an obligation that needs to be met to attain the prize the organizers really want, namely the Olympic Games. The *need* to handcuff Olympic hosts to the Paralympic Games, through contractual regulation, is perhaps apparent from historical instances in which the Paralympic Games have been cast adrift by hosts of the Olympic Games<sup>47</sup>.

An advantage of being connected to the IOC sub-field highlighted by interviewees was the ability for the Paralympic Games to benefit from using, with relatively minor adjustment, venues and facilities developed for the Olympic Games. On a practical level, the benefits for the IPC in having access to Olympic infrastructure was emphasised by Barry: “if you're trying to start from scratch and organise a world level competition without having the facilities or the infrastructure or the money or the other mechanisms that you inherit [from the IOC] then it's extremely difficult. IPC had this advantage”. Nathan concurred: “Its [Paralympic Games] strengths are that it's attached to the Olympics. It is able to draw upon the large resources the Olympics have generated.” For example, the large capacity stadia present the opportunity for the Paralympic Games to yield considerable economic capital through the sale of tickets and merchandise to spectators visiting the Paralympic Games. It may be argued Paralympians, by performing in the same environment as Olympic competitors, have the potential for their performances to attain

greater credibility and perceived legitimacy by others, as their performances in some instances become envisaged by an individual's habitus as an extension of the Olympic Games. However, it could be argued that paradoxically Paralympians may become seen as imposters should their sporting performances not be perceived as comparable to those on display at the Olympic Games.

Alongside the use of Olympic infrastructure, in the form of stadia and sporting facilities, the IPC also receives significant economic capital direct from the IOC (Mason, 2002). As Cameron outlines: "I wouldn't want them [IPC] to turn into the Olympic animal, but one of the positives is the money that it [being linked with the IOC] is bringing in". The receipt of this economic capital from the IOC can arguably be seen as an essential lifeline to the IPC given the problematic creation of economic capital from the performances of purportedly elite athletes with a disability competing at the Paralympic Games. Yet this benefit can also be viewed as an issue for concern, as the IPC sub-field is seen to rely upon the IOC sub-field for its own economic stability.

### *Issues*

Certain members of the Paralympic field expressed concern about an apparent over-reliance on the economic capital the IPC received from the IOC. Some interviewees interpreted the flow of economic capital from the IOC sub-field to the IPC sub-field as a charitable transaction. Economic capital given from the IOC to IPC was considered a charitable donation and good method of generating positive social perceptions of the IOC's values and morals by Daniel who argued:

The Paralympic Movement is largely funded by the IOC and it [financial contribution to IPC by IOC] is about fostering a good feeling in the Olympic movement because they've done something to help people who are less fortunate than themselves.

Likewise Barry suggests the IPC were in the gift of the IOC, with economic support for the Paralympic Games a response with a charitable, rather than sporting, motive:

You get the Paralympic Games because you persuade, at a very high level the Olympic organisation. It was a kind of moral argument or an argument about opportunities to people who are disadvantaged, minority populations or whatever. There was that feel good [factor]. It was in the gift of the Olympic committee to give the facilities, to make the facilities available to disability sport.

To view economic capital received from IOC as charitable could cause the Paralympic Games to be viewed less as a sporting competition, and more as a manifestation of pity felt towards individuals with an impairment. Thus, the economic capital received cannot be used and exchanged for symbolic capital that stems from being perceived as a legitimate elite sporting competition for athletes with an impairment. Paradoxically, as more economic capital is received from the seemingly philanthropic IOC, so the Paralympic Games arguably becomes a less credible example of elite sporting competition. The failure to generate an economic profit by the IPC prevents a symbolic profit being achieved as the perceived value of the cultural capital that comes from belonging to the Paralympic field fails to yield the desired symbolic capital derived from being a recognisably elite sporting event. It was perceived by Nathan that the entire Paralympic field as it is currently configured, is at risk, and to some extent unsustainable, through the over-reliance of the IPC upon the economic capital flowing from the IOC sub-field: "I think there are threats to the Paralympics. I think the cost associated with it, it has grown and grown and...how much longer given the current climate are people [the IOC] going to carry on subsidising it [the IPC]". The constitution of the Paralympic field has and will continue to alter as individuals, groups and entire sub-fields compete for capital resources and subsequently enter and exit the field. The reliance upon the IOC sub-field is such that should the IOC sever its connections with the Paralympic field this would have a dramatic impact upon both the constituency members of the Paralympic field, as other

groups and sub-fields react to this change, and subsequent manifestation of the Paralympic Games.

When discussing the transfer of economic capital from the IOC sub-field to the IPC sub-field, provocatively Donald suggests some people choose to express the unbalanced and seemingly uncontrollable desire of the IPC for the input of the IOC's economic resources as akin to the relationship between a drug dealer and an addict:

*Interviewer:* How do you judge the IOC's involvement within the IPC and the Paralympic Games?

*Donald:* Some people see it as a junkie and dealer relationship where the IOC gives support to the Paralympic Movement to make it viable and make it survive.

This analogy albeit a thought-provoking interpretation can highlight the IOC's involvement in the Paralympic field as based on exploiting the vulnerable IPC sub-field which is obsessed with the various forms of capital IOC provides. Arguably the IOC provides credibility as an elite sporting competition thereby allowing Paralympians to more effectively gain economic and symbolic capital flowing from recognisably elite sporting performances. This conceptualisation of the IOC-IPC relationship again reaffirms the IOC's apparent desire to use the Paralympic field to benefit its own interests, an arguably inherent constant within fields as finite capital resources are contested and secured for oneself (Bourdieu, 1993; 1997). Yet the undertone of this suggestion also alludes to a degree of conflict and manipulation that may exist between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

Some interviewees believed there existed, and remains today, a desire by the IOC to retain a degree of distance from the Paralympic Movement; namely to keep the IPC and Paralympic sport at arm's length from the Olympic Movement. Hence the IPC becomes tolerated by the IOC in order to protect the IOC's vested interests, especially the Olympic Games. When discussing IOC's role in Paralympic sport, Teresa interpreted IOC involvement as a managed operation, intent on protecting the Olympic Movement, rather than developing the Paralympic Movement: "my abiding

memory is the refusal of the IOC to allow Paralympic athletes to use IOC colours, or rings or anything they believed would link Paralympics to the Olympics brand and I do think at the heart of it [IOC] that resistance remains as strong now as it ever did". Donald suggested that, from his experience, the IOC perceived the Paralympic Games and subsequently Paralympians as significantly less than Olympians:

Within the IOC there may still be the perception by some that Paralympic sport isn't even close to Olympic sport. The Olympic movement hasn't been as accepting and as inclusive as, for example, the Commonwealth Games which regularly includes athletes with a disability into their programmes with them given full medal status in Manchester [2002 Commonwealth Games]. So even though the IOC give the funding there is still a definite separation in terms of the two events [Olympic Games and Paralympic Games].

This perceived separation arguably manifests itself as Paralympians are not fully accepted as athletes capable of competing as an integral part of the Olympic Games. Historically, a very small selection of Paralympians has participated in segregated demonstration events at the Olympic Games (Bailey, 2008; Legg et al., 2009). I would argue the issue of including Paralympic demonstration events within Olympic Games is a particularly useful tool for exploring the inter-relation between the IPC and IOC sub-fields.

#### Paralympic demonstration events at Olympic Games (1984-2004)

Paralympic demonstration events were included at each Olympic Games between 1984 and 2004 (Bailey, 2008). During interview, Connor, who was integrally involved in organising these demonstration events, expressed many significant issues that resonated from the inclusion of certain Paralympic events as demonstration sports in the Olympic Games. Connor believed the decision to include demonstration events in the Olympic Games was a result of the fallout from the Los Angeles 1984 Olympic hosts who failed to stage the Paralympic Games:

It [Paralympic demonstration events] was in place from [19]84, and solely came about because of what had taken place in

[19]84 in Los Angeles. What should have happened was that the USA was going to stage the Paralympic Games and didn't and I think as a bit of a sop to the conscience they decided that they would promote Paralympic events in a different way, by having two token [Paralympic] events in the [1984] Olympics.

Thus Paralympic demonstration events were perceived to be introduced to soothe and placate possible ill-feeling toward recent failures by Olympic Games organizers to facilitate the staging of Paralympic Games. Connor went on to outline: "There are all sorts of arguments about what should be the exhibition events, whether it should always be wheelchair track events in the Olympics...whether it should only be athletics at the Olympics or whether it should be other sports". However, from Connor's experience it was not the IPC who were at liberty to decide which sports to include as demonstration events: "The IOC had the entire say on what would happen during the Olympic Games and the whole of that [inclusion of Paralympic demonstration events] decision for the 20 years...whatever we may have wanted as IPC athletics there was never a discussion from the IOC side that this was open for any sort of change". The reasoning behind choosing to continue using two middle distance wheelchair races to act as demonstration events at the Olympic Games was adjudged by Connor to be based on several factors. These included the ease with which these races could be incorporated into the Olympic Games, by merely using the existing Olympic facilities without need for adaptation, as well as, the duration of, and perceived excitement generated by, these races:

I think they [IOC] looked at what would be exciting and obviously some sort of endurance race would be exciting, but it didn't want to be too long because otherwise you're sitting there waiting for something to happen for 10 minutes. But you didn't want it to be too short because then you'd miss the opportunity for the crowd to actually see something in front of them, so the decision was made in [19]84 to have an 800m [wheelchair race] for women and 1500m [wheelchair race] for men. It was very easy for the organisers to stage it.

The ease with which the Paralympic events could be included to the Olympic Games was arguably particularly pertinent given the marginal status of the

Paralympic demonstration events compared to the Olympic Games as a whole. The negligible economic capital created through Paralympic demonstration events for the IOC did not justify significant economic capital being spent by IOC when incorporating these events.

Although Paralympic sports events were participated in at the Olympic Games, they and their athletes were notably distanced from able-bodied Olympians thereby limiting the amount of social and cultural capital that could be generated through Paralympic demonstration events. Connor recollected the segregation of impaired athletes: “[At Seoul 1988 Olympic Games] They had the athletes very much on the fringe, they weren't part of the Olympics in any shape or form, they weren't housed with the Olympians, it was completely separate”. By 1992 some progress could be seen to be made toward integration and the exchange of social capital between Olympians and Paralympians as: “Barcelona [1992 Olympic Games], I think partly because of the relationship we began to build with the organising committees moved the athletes into the village, so they became athletes opposed to just these people in a sideshow that's just on the track”. The symbolic segregation of Olympians and Paralympians bodies competing in demonstration events at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Olympic Games was apparent to Connor:

Sydney [2000 Olympic Games] again...we had the athletes in the village being treated just like all the other Olympians...Athens [2004 Olympic Games] the same, the [Paralympic] athletes treated exactly the same as any other athlete in the [Olympic] Games in terms of everything except their Olympic status...They don't appear in the official results, they don't get status in all of the history books as being Olympians, they are clearly different.

This symbolic demarcation serves to reiterate the apparent divide between the perceived legitimacy of sporting performances by elite athletes with a disability and the profile of Olympic sporting performances. There were attempts to gain full medal status for athletes competing in Paralympic demonstration events at Olympic Games. However, if successful it could be argued that this seemingly positive achievement may further intensify

competition between different disability groups and/ or sports that exist within the Paralympic field. In this regard, Connor stated:

one of the things he [former Paralympian and fundraiser for individuals with spinal cord injuries] pushed for was full Olympic status for the two [demonstration] wheelchair races...I backed hard against that because I felt it was unjustified for two events to be full medal events, as opposed to the other hundred-odd which are equally exciting but just don't happen to have been in the process before.

Here again it is important to remain aware of the fragmented nature of the Paralympic field, including the IPC sub-field, which is made up of competing groups, containing individuals with different habitus; rather than viewing the Paralympic field as a uniform mass of individuals bound by consensus and common purposes. This can be seen to be synonymous with the need to see the heterogeneity within 'the disabled' which can potentially yield a hierarchy of impairments (Deal, 2003; Mastro et al., 1996)

The decision not to include Paralympic demonstration events at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games was discussed with Connor, who asserted:

I think the IPC see...there are other ways of them advertising the Paralympics and Paralympic Movement...therefore they've decided, along with IOC, to withdraw the exhibition events at the [Olympic] Games...In my view, there's nothing wrong with having some [Paralympic] athletes...in the Olympic Games...to say in three weeks time we've got twelve sports and 4,000 athletes coming to the same place...whether it's the right view or the wrong view it's not for me to say.

Note it was apparent to me during interview that Connor was opposed to the IPC's decision, but was unwilling to express this belief. This serves to remind us of how interviewees may attempt to conceal their own habitus, if it is in conflict with the apparent values of an organisation in which they are/ have been involved. Connor has subtly alluded to his disquiet about the IPC decision without fully admitting it, reaffirming the complexities of fully understanding interview responses.

The decision not to include Paralympic demonstration events at Olympic Games can be interpreted in several ways. It may be argued that



this removal of demonstration events shows a coming of age for the Paralympic Movement as there is no longer any need to raise awareness through the Olympic Games as many more people know about Paralympic sport today. Furthermore, it could be argued that to include Paralympic demonstration events led to Paralympic sport being seen as less than the Olympics, as the Paralympic events were only a minority, bit-part, of the Olympic Games. Alternatively, the removal of Paralympic events from the Olympic Games can be seen to distance Olympians and Paralympians even further, as the Olympic Games becomes the sole preserve for bodies deemed to be legitimate athletes endowed with the symbolic capital that emanates from being an Olympian. Further impacts of IOC upon Paralympic sport, as perceived by interviewees, will now be discussed.

#### Embracing Paralympic sport on IOC's terms

Some interviewees expressed concern that the IOC sub-field was influencing IPC's judgements regarding which individuals were perceived as credible examples of elite athletes with a disability. In Cameron's opinion, IPC is intent on copying the IOC, but in doing so fails to appreciate the specialised characteristics of Paralympic sport, specifically the range and impact of impairment within Paralympic sporting competition. Referring to this issue, Cameron argued: "they're [IPC] not the IOC and while you can mimic the IOC there are certain areas that by doing so you're being detrimental to your sports membership". In accordance with this assertion Connor stated: "it's [Paralympic Games] not as simple as the Olympic programme because you've got all those other, firstly, constraints and then obviously conflicts between what does elite mean in terms of different groups and different sizes of [athlete] population". I would suggest an athlete may be perceived as an elite athlete within the IPC sub-field, but fail to be ascribed as an elite athlete if they attempted to compete in the IOC sub-field. It becomes problematic if the IPC sub-field is influenced by the IOC sub-field as to which athletes with a disability possess the ability to be recognised as elite performers and which do not. In Teresa's opinion, it is athletes with severe impairments who are

most at risk in the Paralympic field, from the dominant influence of the IOC sub-field. Teresa asserts:

what the IPC have allowed is the IOC to embrace Paralympic sport on IOC's terms, rather than disabled athletes terms...I think the IPC have been far too keen to build a relationship with the IOC on any basis that the IOC wants and has not had enough confidence in its own profile...the price being paid for that is by those [severely impaired] athletes who don't quite fit the mould.

Hence, it is the perceived values of what constitutes an elite athlete within the IOC sub-field, which Teresa feels are being transferred into the Paralympic field and marginalising some impaired athletes. Teresa suggests: "the IPC are desperate for what they see as equality with the Olympics, but what they don't understand is the messages they're putting out is [sic] actually alienating, excluding athletes with high levels of impairments". For the IPC sub-field to focus on promoting the message that Paralympians are equal in terms that they are the *same* as Olympians serves to disenfranchise those impaired bodies which appear significantly different from able-bodied Olympians, i.e. those with severe impairments. Dennis suggests that in a desire to copy the IOC and attract further interest from the sponsorship sub-field, the IPC sub-field emphasises the similarity, not differences, between the bodies competing at the Paralympic and Olympic Games:

you've got a problem, because the IOC will sell their stuff on able-bodied mainstream bodies, that's the bottom line, and personalities. Now when we come to the IPC we can't do that as well as the IOC, so what effect does that have, that has the effect that they [IPC] will play up the image of 'we're just like able-bodied people'.

Sam cited the marketing of Paralympians as similar to able-bodied sportsmen as a fundamental characteristic of a promotional video screened by the BPA in the run up to the Atlanta 1996 Paralympic Games:

*Interviewer:* What image do you feel the BPA we're trying to portray [in the BPA publicity video you were involved in]?

*Sam:* I think they were trying to portray an image as much like the Olympics as they could. I believe that because of the athletes that they [IPC] chose for the video. So it was mainly amputees that were all walking about and looking as able-bodied as most people. It was more of an able-bodied image than a disabled image.

Dennis perceives individuals with severe impairments are being ostracized from the promoted image of what a Paralympic athlete actually looks like. So much so that he radically suggested there now existed the need for an alternative Paralympic Games for severely impaired individuals who wish to compete in elite disability sport. Talking about the build up to London 2012 Dennis argued:

[London] 2012 is actually handicapping people who don't fit into the IPC Paralympic sports. So there's a whole generation of children and youngsters out there who have gone through adapted games, table cricket and all that; but that doesn't fit the IPC. All the funding now, all the imagery and everything else is going away because of this 'we look just like mainstream athletes, almost'. So there's a lot of feeling within the IPC, from the old ones, that these people [IOC] don't like the more severe cases of disability and so I said to [name of sports administrator] about Alternative Paralympic Games for those people who do a whole range of things and I said to [name of disability sport administrator] they [severely disabled] are becoming marginalised now...because the IPC is in bed with the IOC.

It may be considered that the Paralympic field is being fundamentally distorted by the IOC sub-field as increasingly Paralympians have to fulfil demands placed on them, not borne out of a desire to create fair sporting competition at the Paralympic Games but, to appease and maximise capital flow from other sub-fields including the sponsorship, media and IOC sub-fields. Above, Dennis emphasises not only that in his opinion the IOC sub-field is heavily influencing the manifestation of Paralympic sport but also that fundamentally the Paralympic Games *are* significantly different to the Olympic Games. The extent to which Dennis and other interviewees perceive the Paralympic Movement to be similar and/or different to the Olympic Movement is significant and will now be discussed.

### Perceived similarities and differences between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements

During interview, some members of the Paralympic field sought to emphasise the similarities between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Trevor argued: “the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games are the same in terms of, what they’re trying to do is promote and develop sport at its highest level”. Edward highlighted commonality between the ideological purposes of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements: “it’s [the Paralympic Movement] kind of like the Olympic Movement in terms of how it’s [Paralympic Games] a sporting event, but also an educational platform and way to serve as a vehicle for social understanding and social development and so forth”. Cameron asserted both the Olympic and Paralympic Movements sought to achieve a degree of social change:

Interviewer: Some people might argue the Paralympic Games is an important arena to highlight the social issues individuals with a disability face, would you agree with that?

Cameron: I think it’s an appropriate by-product, in the same way the Olympic Games is a community of people talking together, and I think highlighting the needs of different impairment groups and disabilities is all there and it’s a by-product. I don’t think it’s the sole purpose of the IPC, because it’s not the sole purpose of the Olympics to bring world peace.

Thus Cameron is using the Olympic Games as the legitimate model for the Paralympic Games to follow because the achievement of raising social awareness of the needs of different impairment groups is sub-ordinate to how Paralympic sporting performances are valued that is most important, I would argue just like the Olympics. Indeed, when highlighting the commonality between the Olympic and Paralympic Movement there was perhaps a tendency for the identity of the Paralympic Movement to become subsumed by the Olympic Movement. For example when talking with Edward he stated: “I identify as being an Olympian, even though the official name for disabled athletes at that [Paralympic] level is a Paralympian”. Hence Edward is identifying the commonality, as he perceives it, between the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the athletes who compete there. Yet in self-

identifying as an 'Olympian' Edward obscures the identity of his membership of the Paralympic Movement and to some extent the existence of the Paralympic Games. For Edward, the values of the Olympic Movement were the same as those belonging to the Paralympic Movement:

The Olympic values are the same thing as the Paralympic values...what the Paralympic Movement is trying to do for people with disabilities is exactly the same as the Olympic movement is trying to do for humanity in general, which actually includes people with disabilities. The Paralympic piece is just a subset, because the Olympic movement is also about empowerment for young people, for women, for all sorts of people. So I think that's another confusion; the values. It's not that their subsumed, they're the same thing".

It may be suggested that if the Olympic Games is serving the needs of humanity what is the need for the Paralympic Games? The fact that the vast majority of individuals with impairments do not compete within the Olympic Games would be seen to undermine Edward's assertions of commonality as the performances of elite athletes with a disability are not celebrated at the Olympic Games, unlike other minority groups based on gender and/or race. As such the need for an elite sports competition different to the Olympic Games becomes self-evident as impaired athletes are not catered for by the Olympic Games.

I would argue there also exists the need to promote the performances of Paralympians differently compared to their supposed Olympic counterparts. Olympians are arguably often cast as superhuman individuals who have overcome many barriers. Through this notion of trying to mirror the Olympic Movement, the same coverage is desired, as discussed earlier, for Paralympians. Yet in doing so, this can be seen as perpetuating the supercrip image (Berger, 2004; Howe, 2008a) that an individual with a disability can overcome all of society's barriers if they work hard enough. So in one sense this inevitably makes elite disability sport, as experienced at the Paralympic Games, problematic for furthering the development of disability rights and disability issues. In relation to this, Sam inadvertently suggested that if more disabled people and arguably the disability rights sub-field was more

dominant in the decision-making processes of the IPC sub-field, the process of continually emphasising the commonality between the Olympic and Paralympic Games may be curtailed. Thus appreciating how groups and sub-fields within a field compete for control and governance over the stakes within a field (Bourdieu, 1993). Sam asserted:

if it [Paralympic Movement] was controlled by disabled people, I'm not sure the drive would be to have this parallel notion with the Olympics. I think it's flawed, I'm not convinced...this obsession with being the same as the Olympics, for me it [Paralympic Games] isn't, it's an unreachable dream...I think disability sport has to make its own way and make it popular in its own right.

Teresa argued the need for 'Paralympic pride' to combat what she perceives to be the import of incompatible IOC ideals into the Paralympic field:

the IOC's ideals really still hark back to what the [Ancient] Olympics were all about back in Greek times which is about physicality, and disabled athletes, particularly those of us with a different physicality, certainly not a less valuable one but a different physicality, are never going to fit that model...Until there is a pride, a Paralympic pride, in the same way there is a disability pride in the disability rights movement, until that happens we're in danger.

A danger seemingly fundamentally borne out of the differences, rather than similarities, between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

Many members of the Paralympic field interviewed perceived significant differences between the Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Even when Trevor was asserting the apparent similarities between Olympic and Paralympic athletes he paradoxically reaffirmed the differences between the social perceptions of Olympians and Paralympians. In response to the suggestion that a promotional video for the Chicago 2016 Olympic and Paralympic bid emphasised that Paralympic athletes are the same as Olympic athletes, Trevor responded:

I haven't any problem with that, when you put them [Olympians and Paralympians] purely in the sporting context I would subscribe to that view as well. It's what added value that

Paralympic athletes bring to the whole process which I think is different from an Olympic athlete...There aren't many of us who can look at Michael Phelps or [Michael] Jordan and say I can be like that. So where do they [able-bodied and disabled] get that inspiration? They get that inspiration by seeing [Paralympic] athletes they can associate with overcoming challenges...the distinctive characteristics [of the Paralympic Movement] are the ability to relate to people and to understand that it [Paralympic Movement] has a wider responsibility beyond sport, than the Olympics feels it has.

Hence, according to Trevor, we should view the sporting performances of Paralympians and Olympians as both laced with the symbolic capital that resonates from legitimate elite sporting achievement. Yet the displays of Paralympians seemingly overcoming their disability renders their performances different to that of Olympians. The inherent paradoxical contradiction that is encountered when asserting that the Paralympic Games is the same as the Olympic Games was discussed with Dennis who argued:

If they [IPC] just treat it as a straight sporting event, why do you need it? So in one sense we haven't found the right way to project it [Paralympic Games]...If it's a great 800metres, it's just like mainstream, so why do we need it [in the Paralympic Games and not just include Paralympians in the Olympic Games]. They're [IPC] getting themselves into a corner.

Jack inadvertently articulated this paradox when identifying himself as a Paralympian *not* an Olympian:

I had a conversation with someone the other day and they were saying 'do you classify yourself as an Olympic athlete?' 'I'm a Paralympic athlete'. I've never competed at an Olympics I see myself as an elite athlete but I can't classify myself as being an Olympian because I've never been to an Olympics. I've been to a Paralympics, and I see equal value in that, and to me that should and does sit at the same level.

This is arguably pragmatic, but nonetheless problematic as Jack urges us to see the difference and the similarity at the same time. Jack wishes to be endowed with both the cultural capital stemming from being a Paralympian yet also wishing for the symbolic capital afforded to Olympic athletes who are

perceived as legitimate producers of elite sporting performances. I would argue this inevitably leads to contradiction and ineffective capital accumulation, be it economic, cultural and/or symbolic for elite athletes with a disability wishing to be seen as a Paralympian who is equal in every respect to an Olympian. While impairment should not lead to an inequality in opportunities within society, inevitably within sport the fundamental basis for Paralympic sport stems from the inequalities between able-bodied athletes and athletes with a disability which affect their ability to compete against each other. This difference cannot be easily abridged through a change in semantics nor disability correctness (Shakespeare, 2006).

During interview, some individuals sought to highlight the significant disparities between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The contrast between the Paralympic Movement and Olympic Movement was emphasised by Barry stating: "It's [IPC] less powerful, immensely less powerful. They [IOC] have the priority event. You know people like to say the Olympics are the curtain raiser or the test event for the Paralympics, but actually it's quite the appendix is the Paralympics coming afterwards". It may be suggested that the economic and cultural capital that the Paralympic Games yields is increased through its association with the Olympic Games but the disparity between the two sports competitions should not be understated. The need for perspective and a degree of caution in overstating the relative economic and symbolic capital available to the IPC, compared to the IOC, was cautioned by Donald: "we [IPC] try to measure up to the IOC in many ways, we don't have the resources and staff that the IOC has, and we perhaps focus too much on trying to emulate the IOC, but without its resources". The reasons for these differences in resources are no doubt complex and multi-faceted. To help understand the difference between the economic, cultural and social capital that is possessed and created by the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games it is useful to consider how Dennis, inadvertently referring to the concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), expressed how he believes the general public interprets individuals with a disability:



The public are not comfortable with impairment...It's psychologically economical for us to classify things because if not we'd have to evaluate everything we see over and over again...we've got an inbuilt disposition and for most people...disability isn't something with a value system put on it, its got a negative value on it. It's to do with deviance away from the norm. So there is a fundamental reason why when you talk to other people they can't promote the Paralympics the same as the IOC's [Olympics] because you have to involve spin-offs and marvellous things; recovered from an accident...society can't handle it [Paralympic Games] really, as a straight sporting event.

Thus Dennis is arguing the perception of disability incorporated and enacted by an individual's habitus causes the IPC sub-field to have to employ different strategies when marketing the Paralympic Games which appreciate the impact of the social stigma of disability. I would suggest that this limits the ability to portray Paralympians in the same ways in which Olympians are promoted. To highlight disability as an overt difference between Paralympians and Olympians compromises the analogy that Paralympians are the same Olympians. However it is the disability specific attributes of a Paralympian's identity that, for example Dennis suggested "spin offs and marvellous things; recovered from an accident", had to be exploited, not Paralympians sporting performances. Trevor seemingly concurs as he believes disability to "add value" to the performances of Paralympians when compared to Olympians:

I think the difference between the two [Olympic and Paralympic ] Games is that it is very difficult to associate with what you see on the track at the Olympic Games...Olympic athletes...they're basically gods with a small 'g'. They are superhuman in terms of the reality of our day-to-day living. The Paralympics on the other hand have this ability to touch us all. We can associate with it...people have been either touched by disability or with challenge in their lives, there's a humanity about it [Paralympic Games] that people can feel, can see and touch.

Paradoxically here Trevor is suggesting through being different to Olympians, Paralympians are seen as more like individuals, able-bodied or disabled, within society who do not compete at the Olympic Games. However the genesis for this apparent commonality inevitable contributes to Paralympians

being marginalised twice. Firstly by having their identity defined by their impairment, and secondly by their apparent inability to be recognised as a legitimate elite athlete as, I would suggest, Olympians are perceived.

It became apparent that perceived differences between Olympians and Paralympians were, for some interviewees, fundamentally based on comparisons made between the *sporting* performances on show at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this regard, Sam although a former Paralympian, expressed his preference for watching the Olympic, rather than Paralympic, Games; because Olympians were seen to achieve a better standard of sporting performance;

*Sam:* If I had the choice of watching an hour of the Olympics or watching an hour of the Paralympics I'd go for the Olympics. I think it's just, for me, as a sports spectator, I enjoy it more.

*Interviewer:* Why do you feel that?

*Sam:* I think it's [Olympic Games] better sport, it doesn't mean I don't appreciate what disabled athletes are doing but as a spectator sport I prefer the Olympics...as far as disabled sports people are concerned some of the things are done differently and the thing is we're conditioned and used to seeing sport done in a certain way.

Sam here is reflecting upon, perhaps through greater exposure to able-bodied sport particularly through the media, how his habitus perceives able-bodied sport to be the norm and the form of sport he is most familiar with and has derived enjoyment from. To watch the Paralympic Games is a deviation from this norm, especially when Paralympians use equipment which is not used in able-bodied sport, for example wheelchairs or prostheses. Alternatively Sam can be seen to be alluding to the inferior times or distances achieved in, for example, many athletics events at the Paralympic Games, when compared to Olympic equivalents. This disparity in sporting performance was commented on by Nathan:

when you're looking, for example, at the throwing events, they [Paralympians] don't compare. [Disabled] People are throwing the javelin 30, 40metres opposed to 80, 90metres [in the

Olympic Games] and so the sports don't look aesthetically as good as non-disabled sports [at the Olympic Games]. That sounds awful, but they do look quite clumsy compared to non-disabled sports.

This difference in sporting performance may in part explain the reasoning behind what Donald perceived as a lack of respect for Paralympians: “There's still big disparities in terms of the respect level for Paralympic athletes compared to their Olympic counterparts...that is still one of the challenges; getting that recognition for its athletes as sportsmen/women”. Seemingly, in response to this apparent need to heighten respect attributed to Paralympians, Connor suggested that the Paralympic Games may need to change its focus if it is to become appreciated, i.e. respected, by more people: “the Paralympics historically has only been available to people with a disability and those who have been involved in supporting them or the movement itself, and it needs a change of focus to be something that comes to the notice of more people”. Arguably combining athletes with a disability with able-bodied athletes may be one technique through which Paralympic sport can gain both respect, through potentially heightened performances, and also become noticed by a broader range of people. Some able-bodied athletes, previously competing in the IOC sub-field have already made the transition to become part of the athlete sub-field within the Paralympic field. This has occurred most notably within some events in Paralympic cycling (Para-cycling).

In Para-cycling events, athletes with a visual impairment compete on the back of a tandem bicycle, with an able-bodied 'pilot' pedalling on the front<sup>48</sup>. Among interviewees particular issues were raised about how the performances of visually impaired tandem cyclists were judged. It became apparent that some interviewees believed the performances of the disabled athlete were being marginalised, even obscured completely, by the presence of the able-bodied pilot. This was an issue that Graeme was aware of from his experience of Para-cycling:

*Interviewer:* Thinking about blind and visually impaired cyclists and the use of tandem cycling; do you feel the successes of

blind and visually impaired cyclists are sometimes ignored and too much focus placed on the able-bodied pilot?

*Graeme:* Yeah it is sometimes and particularly more so in the last year when [former Olympic cyclist] has come on board as a pilot for tandem cycling. He's getting far more attention than the [visually impaired] person on the back...it's about trying to turn the journalists round to seeing the person on the back is newsworthy and the amount of training that person does, and how they're limited in their performance, and how brilliant they might be as a performer.

Here Graeme is somewhat paradoxically calling on visually impaired cyclists to gain more credibility and legitimacy as an athlete, i.e. attaining the symbolic capital from being seen as an elite athlete, by focussing on their efforts away from the track, rather than their performances on it. While this may appear pragmatic, it also perpetuates the notion that the sporting ability of the visually impaired cyclist is subordinated by the presence of an able-bodied pilot. As such, the contribution of the visually impaired cyclist to the performance may be questioned, an issue apparent to Michelle: "it [visually impaired tandem cycling] may look like somebody is just being pushed or pedalled around and they [visually impaired cyclists] don't really contribute much to the actual racing". Indeed Barry, note a former administrator in blind sport, expressed his belief that able-bodied cyclists *are* more responsible for a successful performance in tandem Para-cycling. Drawing on his specific experience of an athlete who had recently transferred to Para-cycling, Barry argues:

You're not going to tell me it's a 50-50 contribution because I don't believe it is [in visually impaired Para-cycling events]...He's got to turn his wheels. Yes, he [named visually impaired Paracyclist] was very good at that. He wasn't too good at running, but he could do that. He could move his legs fast, he just didn't deliver any force. That's okay [named former Olympic cyclist] is there.

Thus, it may be argued athletes with a disability are being marginalised and their performances devalued by the presence of able-bodied athletes at the Paralympic Games. Hence, any symbolic capital afforded to seemingly elite

performance within a tandem Para-cycling event is given to the able-bodied pilot not the impaired athlete.

Another issue raised by interviewees, concerning the inclusion of able-bodied athletes within Para-cycling, regarded the way in which these able-bodied athletes are recruited. The method through which these pilots are recruited was discussed with Barry:

I never felt quite comfortable as a sport's administrator when I was representing blind cycling...British cycling were taking people off their Olympic programme and saying well actually you're very, very good it's true you're number 5 in the world but we've got number 1 already and at number 5 you actually don't have any value to us. I can offer you a parachute out, instead of paying you 20 odd thousand [pounds] a year, say for £20,000 we'll put you on the Paralympic team.

Michelle expressed how she felt that this recruitment policy, while within the rules of competition, could lead to visually impaired cyclists performances, and their sport, being devalued:

does that [recruitment policy] reflect badly on the Paralympics because it's not a current athlete, it's someone that's been retired and he's still able to compete [at the Paralympic Games]. You know that sort of thing that the Paralympics is something you do after the Olympics. I think there's some issues with that. But in terms of is it fair or not, yeah for sure, if that's [recruiting former Olympic cyclists] going to give you the best performance then of course you do it.

Here Michelle can be seen to be commenting on an issue that will inevitably become more profound should more former Olympians find themselves competing at the Paralympic Games.

There exists the real potential for more former Olympians to compete at the Paralympic Games in future. Through negotiating what is currently permissible as a minimal disability, some former Olympic bodies can be seen to straddle the perceived boundary which demarcates disabled athletes from able-bodied athletes.

The concept and implications of minimal disability, as understood in wheelchair basketball, was discussed with Cameron who stated:

minimal disability [in wheelchair basketball]... it's the equivalent of losing a foot in terms of function. So you may have a screwed up knee, screwed up hips, screwed up back, you can't play the running game; you've had a couple of operations, extensive physio has not worked, therefore you can play wheelchair basketball. Germany went from 7<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> in the world in the space of three years because they were able to recruit people from [able-bodied] basketball. In the UK, we're happy to look at netball, we will look at basketball, netball is a bigger women's sport, but we'll also look at Lacrosse, Rugby, badminton maybe, where they may screw themselves up through too much sport.

Thus, wheelchair basketball clubs, and other sports organisations, may actively seek to recruit 'injured' athletes previously competing in able-bodied sport. Hence an individual may live a lifestyle which may be perceived as synonymous with being able-bodied, yet through their inability to compete in able-bodied sport, these bodies become ascribed as permitted members of the Paralympic field as athletes with a disability. However, in discussion with Dennis it became apparent that there exists a tension between minimally disabled bodies and their perceived legitimacy to compete as athletes with a disability at the Paralympic Games:

people like me are not interested coaching or putting my taxes into someone who has lost that much of their hand [indicates loss of fingers on one hand] and who's in the 400metres [at the Paralympic Games]. They should run 46.20sec. They should swim 52.50sec...most of these people taking home £22,000 they don't need sport for the disabled. They could fit into a very high level county competition. We haven't adjusted the concept of disability and the needs as times moved on.

Here the specificity of impairment and subsequent labelling of a body as disabled is being explored. Dennis is arguing that in his view that some minimally disabled athletes do not possess the cultural capital to be perceived as belonging to the athlete sub-field as Paralympians. In accordance with the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990); while impairment may be constant, the disabling effects of that impairment are differentiated depending on the context in which the person functions. I would suggest it is this contextual specificity that Dennis is referring to as he perceives some

bodies competing at the Paralympic Games as not sufficiently disabled to prevent them competing fairly against able-bodied athletes in mainstream sport. However, Sam suggests there may be an assumption by, athletes and coaches (able-bodied and disabled) that the presence of a socially perceived disability may negate that individual from being able to fairly compete in able-bodied sport: “you [an impaired athlete] can't compete fairly against non-disabled people in lots of sports, so you do disability sport, so you can compete against people with a similar impairment”. Thus, for an individual to possess an impairment may be perceived to render that athlete at an unfair disadvantage, meaning they are encouraged or feel obliged to compete against athletes who they feel are their equals, namely athletes with a disability, not able-bodied athletes, even if they may in fact not be significantly restricted in their sporting performance by their impairment. As such, there may be members of the athlete sub-field who have the ability to compete outside of the Paralympic field in able-bodied sports competitions, but have been hitherto dissuaded or prevented from doing so.

One Paralympian, discussed during interview, who has attempted to compete in able-bodied sport is Oscar Pistorius, a double leg amputee (Thomas and Smith, 2009). The notion of fair competition between impaired and able-bodied athletes has been brought to prominence by Pistorius's attempts to compete at the Olympic Games (Edwards, 2008). The impact of Pistorius attempting to compete at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games was perceived by some to be potentially damaging for the credibility of the Paralympic Games as *the* elite disability sport event for athletes with a disability. Both Cameron and Pdraig were wary of individuals perceiving Pistorius' desire to compete at the Olympic Games as while on the one hand a natural progression for an athlete to want to test themselves against 'the best' competitors, yet on the other hand causing the Paralympic Games to be seen as less than the Olympics and second rate because of Pistorius' desire to compete at a seemingly greater sporting competition. Cameron questioned:

Is he [Pistorius] saying the Paralympic Movement isn't good enough for me, I don't want to be in the Paralympics because I'm good enough to be in the Olympics, therefore the Paralympics must be second class. Or is he just saying I want to be the best I can be...he wants to be in competitions that stretch him to the absolute limit and clearly in the Paralympics, certainly the 400metres, that doesn't happen.

Meanwhile Pdraig stated: "he's [Oscar Pistorius] going fast and he sees his next challenge as the faster [Olympic] 400metres. But I think the public could start to see the Paralympics as a second rate event". Here, the bind in which athletes find themselves as representatives of their sport but also as an individual wanting to attain their personal goals is clearly apparent. The way in which Pistorius was perceived to have responded to apparent barriers which prevented him competing against able-bodied athletes was revealing of this issue. Trevor stated:

he's [Pistorius] being guided to a view that somehow he has to see this [attempts to compete against able-bodied athletes] as a battle rather than saying actually we can get people to where we want to be in a much more positive way if we do things differently and not scream the discrimination card. It's not going to help. Maybe there is discrimination out there, but keep on working at the evidence to suggest you don't have the [unfair] advantage [from his prostheses]. Great for creating the debate, but I think he was badly managed and I think the Paralympic Movement for disabled sport could have come out of this better, could have come out in a much more positive way and driven this debate further in the way we wanted to go.

This can be perceived to be a naïve suggestion that justice will win out as long as an individual tries hard enough, echoes of the supercrip image applied to some Paralympians (Berger, 2004). Alternatively this comment can be seen to represent a political-based desire for the IPC sub-field to be dominant over the athlete sub-field, thereby being more influential both in relations with the IOC sub-field and the Paralympic field as a whole. As such does Pistorius do a disservice to the Paralympic field as a whole if he achieves the opportunity for Paralympic athletes to compete in the IOC sub-field, or is the export of Paralympic athletes capable of competing with able-bodied athletes to the IOC sub-field an inevitable consequence and



manifestation, especially in light of the ever-increasing rhetoric used to promote Paralympians as just like Olympians. The assertion that Paralympians and Olympians are the same and could one day compete against each other was rebuffed by Dennis. Using Pistorius as an example, Dennis asserts that able-bodied and impaired athletes, in his opinion, should not compete against each other:

*Interviewer:* This discussion [of technology and Pistorius specifically] leads onto the notion of whether Oscar Pistorius should be allowed to compete in able-bodied athletics

*Dennis:* No he shouldn't because...his [Pistorius's] legs do not feel like mine when he gets to 300 [metres] because he hasn't had to carry from there (the floor) up to here (the knee) anti-gravity oxygen debt and everything else, and some of the energy he spent getting to 300 [metres], he's got the energy back again, which I can't get.

*Interviewer:* So are you suggesting no impaired athletes should compete with able-bodied people, because you're not comparing like with like?

*Dennis:* I think that might be a principle that we would be best to hold on to almost, because if you get out of the box you're going to get into silly contradictions and things. Just accept that principle.

In discussions concerning the potential export of impaired athletes from the athlete sub-field to, among others, the IOC sub-field, the role of the technology sub-field appeared significant. As expressed above by Dennis, it is the technological advancements, for example lighter, stronger materials which make prostheses more efficient movers, that are a source of concern and creator of unfair advantages (Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). Even though without, for example prostheses, some impaired athletes would be unable to compete in sport at all or live independent lives. The apparent hysteria surrounding the use of technology which allows Paralympic athletes, such as Pistorius, to compete with able-bodied athletes was deemed peculiar by Donald given his interpretation of how the technology sub-field impacts upon sports outside of the Paralympic field:

I don't know where this whole hysteria about the athlete as cyborg, what is bionic what's not bionic has come from...it's all a grey area. There are professional baseball players using pre-emptive eye surgery to improve their visual acuity. There are contact lenses that sometimes improve this as well which pick up certain colours better than others. It seems to me that that is all seen as okay. When someone injures their ACL [anterior cruciate ligament] it's still okay using braces or having surgery to replace human tissues and then rehab to make the leg even stronger than before, so is that somehow becoming a cyborg athlete?

With inadvertent reference to the IOC sub-field, Connor perpetuates the fear surrounding the cyborg athlete and arguably provides reasoning to prevent Pistorius competing in at the Olympic Games (Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). Connor warns:

If Oscar [Pistorius] were to win the Olympic gold medal, who's to say that two or three other people may deliberately have their legs amputated on the basis that they too can win \$10 million next year from being the Olympic champion, because that is probably what Oscar would win if he became Olympic champion. So there are all sorts of strange questions you start to wonder about.

This apparent self-mutilation may appear abhorrent and also far-fetched, seemingly over-emphasising the actions individuals are willing to take to accrue capital. However, the current use of drugs, some deemed 'legal' and some illicit, alongside the use of strong, lightweight materials to fuse broken bones together to enable 'able-bodied' athletes to continue competing; illustrates the lengths to which some individuals are willing to go to secure sporting success and the economic and symbolic capital that comes with it. It also illustrates, as previously discussed, how the distinction between impaired and able-bodied athletes may arguably become even more blurred in the future. In light of this it may be suggested that the relations between the IOC sub-field and members of the Paralympic field including the IPC and athlete sub-fields represent an important juncture at which to analyse current and potential interpretations of physicality as expressed through sport.

## Summary

This chapter emerged from discussions with interviewees which inadvertently focussed on the perceived importance of the IOC sub-field in shaping relations within the Paralympic field. An appraisal of the impact of the IOC sub-field upon the Paralympic field was explored by firstly reflecting on the perceived benefits and issues of being associated with the IOC sub-field as expressed by interviewees. This incorporated an analysis of the perceived flow of economic capital from the IOC to the IPC sub-field. Secondly, the similarities and differences between the Paralympic Movement and Olympic Movement, as perceived by members of the Paralympic field, were explored. A discussion of the exchange of athletes from the Olympic Games to the Paralympic Games and vice versa was then provided. This included consideration of the movement of former Olympians into Paracycling and the potential for further 'able-bodied' athletes to compete in Paralympic sport. Finally the potential for an athlete with a disability, namely Oscar Pistorius, to move into the IOC sub-field and compete in the Olympic Games was discussed. The discussion again raised the issue of the ability to compare the sporting performances of impaired athletes with those of able-bodied athletes, in particular given the implications of Paralympians using technology to compete in sport. The potential for future tensions between the IOC and IPC sub-fields as the Paralympic field develops was referred to. In order to attempt to provide an insight into how the Paralympic field may alter in the future, the possible future pathways for the Paralympic field were discussed with interviewees and will now be explored.

### **Findings and Discussion - Potential Future Developments of the Paralympic Movement**

This chapter disseminates the perceived opportunities and threats interviewees foresaw for the Paralympic field. Some members of the Paralympic field named sports/events which they envisaged being, or hoped would be, either included or removed from upcoming Paralympic Games. These opinions will be explored and include discussion of the inclusion of athletes with intellectual impairments to, and the possible loss of boccia from, the Paralympic Games. Subsequently, the potential for including the sport of powerchair football into future Paralympic Games is critiqued. The possible reconfiguration of Paralympic sports/ events is then considered. This chapter culminates with an exploration of some interviewees' beliefs that the Paralympic Movement will become ever more closely involved and/or 'controlled' by the Olympic Movement. The potential implications of such an alliance, or takeover, for Paralympians and the Paralympic field are subsequently critically analysed.

#### **Must Subtract to Add: Balancing Future Paralympic Games**

During interview, some members of the Paralympic field were forthcoming in naming a selection of disability sports which they felt could potentially be included in future Paralympic Games. Donald suggested: "I think there could be a case for including standing volleyball. There are other sports, maybe baseball or racquetball which could be included". Meanwhile Abigail expressed: "I think wheelchair badminton are having an argument about it [inclusion in the Paralympic Games] at the moment". This reveals the apparent permeability of the Paralympic field, in that it is perceived that new sports have the ability to enter the Paralympic Games as has occurred previously (DePauw and Gavron, 2005). However, other interviewees, rather than championing new sports/ events for inclusion into the Paralympic Games instead wished to talk about the broader issues influencing the type of sports and number of events held at the Paralympic Games.

Rather than wanting to include new sports, Daniel expressed a desire for the Paralympic programme to allow sports/events currently in the Paralympic Games to be given a chance to establish themselves, rather than being subject to the rapid chopping and changing of events which, it is perceived, currently occurs. Daniel argued: "It's so hit and miss whether your event is going to be included in the next Paralympic Games or not. There needs to be more stability in the Paralympic programme in order to see what the future directions of the Paralympics are". The reasons for this changing Paralympic sport programme are debatable. Reference may be made to the tensions created by small athlete populations and desires to only include events that possess the desired symbolic capital akin to credible elite sporting practice (see chapters 8 and 9).

When speculating about which sports/events will be included in future Paralympic Games, Michelle chose to emphasise the tensions created by Paralympic sports having to compete against each other to get included into the Paralympic Games. In particular she articulated the impact of the athlete quota at the Paralympic Games stating:

There's that 4000 athlete cap, so it'll be interesting to see what transpires, especially if the intellectual disability group is reinstated because that will have a huge impact on numbers and events, and other events will definitely have to be cut from the programme to make space for that...just as introducing rowing [at 2008 Paralympics Games] had an impact on sporting numbers...There's always that continual shifting and balancing.

The imposition of the athlete quota at the Paralympic Games, partly a consequence of the IOC-IPC relationship, places an arguably pragmatic, but nonetheless constricting, boundary upon which elite athletes with a disability may or may not access the cultural, and at times symbolic, capital that emanates from being a Paralympian. In interview, Daniel was hesitant to name sports which he believed could or should be added, because he was aware that the inclusion of a sport would inevitably cause the removal of other events. When interviewing Daniel on the day before the IPC decided to

re-include athletes with an intellectual impairment into the Paralympic Games, he suggested:

I think that in order for me to say something should be added [to the Paralympic Games] I would also really have to say something should be excluded...I can't think of a sport that should be removed. Although I am quite pleased that the athletes with intellectual impairments are not part of the Paralympic Games currently [\*accurate as of time of interview]; I think there's no room for intellectually impaired basketball.

Here, Daniel may be perceived to be reiterating an apparent desire to maintain the current Paralympic programme, to allow current Paralympic sports/events to develop. However, in doing so he also re-raises the issue of which impairment groups should be permitted to compete at the Paralympic Games (Sherrill, 1989) and the possible existence of a hierarchy of impairments (Mastro et al. 1996). When discussing with interviewees about which sports/events they wished or believed would be included/removed from future Paralympic Games the impact of an individual's impairment, rather than the attributes of the sport per se, can be seen to have been highly influential in some interviewees' responses.

Daniel was not alone in expressing concern about the potential inclusion of athletes with an intellectual impairment in future Paralympic Games. Highlighting failings of a previous classification system used to determine the presence and level of intellectual impairment, Cameron seemingly feared for the credibility of the Paralympic Games if there were further problems with the classification of Paralympic athletes with an intellectual impairment (Bailey, 2008). Cameron stated:

I see a threat in terms of learning disabilities inclusion...I believe the IPC need to be steadfast with the fundamentals of Paralympic sport and one of those is the classification system is solid...It would be wrong to exclude anybody but the [classification] system [for athletes with an intellectual impairment] has to be right and if it blows up again, and if it blew up in London [2012] with able-bodied people playing the sport...I think Paralympic sport would be, not signing its death warrant, but going back 10, 15 years of credibility. That worries me. But people still need to move forward and accept groups.

However, is Cameron in fact employing double standards when citing the classification system as a reason to justify the barring of athletes with an intellectual impairment from upcoming Paralympic Games. The classification systems used to classify Paralympic athletes with physical and/or sensory impairments have continually been questioned and revised (Richter et al., 1992; Sherrill, 1999; Tweedy, 2002) and yet there is no suggestion that these athletes with physical and/or sensory impairments should be removed to prevent further public embarrassments befalling the Paralympic field generated by misclassification. Opposition toward inclusion of athletes with an intellectual impairment in future Paralympic Games was asserted, even if the classification system applied to these athletes was considered robust. Daniel, contrary to his own personal desires, believes that athletes with intellectual impairments will be included in future Paralympic Games. However, he perceives the inclusion of intellectually impaired athletes to be conducive with a desire to portray Paralympians who compete in an aesthetically pleasing manner (Bertling and Schierl, 2008) while at the same time marginalising those athletes who do not:

*Interviewer:* Do you feel those athletes with intellectual disabilities will be able to compete in greater numbers post-London 2012?

*Daniel:* I believe they will be included in [London] 2012, I believe there will be an outcry if not and I think the Paralympic Movement in some respects would like to include more of them. Because of the battle for numbers they can push more marginalised bodies out of the way, so that is one of the things that is very, very good for the [Paralympic] Movement about having intellectually impaired athletes included is that they're aesthetically pleasing and I think aesthetics is where it is at the moment .

*Interviewer:* When talking about certain bodies being marginalised, which bodies within the Paralympic Movement are at risk of being marginalised?

*Daniel:* I think those bodies that are less aesthetically pleasing, however you want to define that, for example bodies with cerebral palsy, etc.

Concerns that athletes with cerebral palsy, particularly those with severe cerebral palsy, would be marginalised or even removed from the Paralympic Games were also shared by Donald and Abigail. Although Donald felt athletes with severe cerebral palsy were not at immediate risk of being removed from the Paralympic Games, he still felt their position within the Paralympic Games was uncertain. Donald stated:

I don't see it happening any time soon, this removal of athletes with severe cerebral palsy, but 20 years down the road, who knows. Looking at the Paralympic Movement in the future who knows what pressures it will face, perhaps as it gets closer to the Olympics there will be a real tension on Boccia as there isn't a natural counterpart for it in the Olympic Games.

Here Donald is arguably highlighting the impact of a closer IPC-IOC relationship and potential disparity between the perceived viability for athletes with a disability to identify as elite sportsmen who are similar to Olympians (see chapter 9). Furthermore, the perceived need for an Olympic counterpart would also seemingly jeopardise other disability specific sports such as Goalball. Subsequently events for athletes with, for example, severe cerebral palsy appear vulnerable because of the dominating economic and symbolic capital resources and power existing within the IOC sub-field, as well as the media and sponsorship sub-fields, who wish to promote and sell a particular image of elite sport.

Abigail suggested the level of excitement created when watching a boccia match to be a potential issue, especially when compared to the more dynamic performances on show in other Paralympic sports:

I would worry that some of the less exciting sports would be cut, the likes of boccia and those sorts of things...I would hate to see the Paralympic Games just becoming for those crash, bang, wallop, exciting sports I think it has to keep it's mix, because we've got so many players with a severe disability that it would be criminal to cut them.

Thus while calling to maintain boccia as part of the Paralympic Games, Abigail is arguably suggesting this should be achieved not because boccia is a credible elite sport capable of exchanging its cultural capital into symbolic



capital, but to allow the Paralympic Games to represent a broader spectrum of impairment. Thus the cultural capital of belonging to the sport of boccia arguably becomes readily transferable into charitable economic capital but less conducive to acquiring economic capital deriving from its perceived sporting quality. Subsequently, boccia becomes a pitiable practice, not a revered example of elite sport. Alternatively, Abigail is perhaps merely articulating the subjective opinion of what counts as exciting according to her habitus (Bourdieu, 1997). I would suggest all sports will be perceived to be 'exciting' to some individuals' habitus and of no interest at all to others. In this instance is the perceived level of 'excitement' created by a sport merely being used to seemingly justify the removal of a sport such as boccia which, as previously discussed, fails to clearly identify as a credible elite disability sport played by *athletes* with a disability (McCann, 1996). Alluding to the need to appeal to the media sub-field, Donald also highlights boccia may be at risk because of the limited economic and symbolic capital which it is perceived the sport can yield compared to the economic capital outlay in staging the event. Donald speculated:

I could see athletes eventually being dropped at some point and the arguments for that being from the IPC, for example with powerchairs [used in boccia], it's too expensive to hold these events and provide support for these athletes. It may come down to branding and not fitting in with the branding. Another [reason] might be the pressure to include new events. So it's maybe a case of some sports being seen to be more attractive to the media. For example, boccia, is not very strong on TV so these events for CP athletes are put on at off-peak times, and with the need to sell your event...it may come to a time when boccia is a scapegoat to include other events.

Thus, the inability to attract economic capital in the form of investment by the media and sponsorship sub-fields, makes the sport of boccia an unprofitable element of the Paralympic Games. Therefore, in an attempt to derive profit, be that economic, cultural or symbolic, arguably a desire of all individuals and/or groups, the IPC sub-field could perhaps remove boccia and replace it with a sport which the IPC sub-field perceives to be better suited to the creation of profit (Bourdieu, 1993).

By comparison, when discussing the Paralympic future of boccia, Dennis argued that in his opinion boccia would never be removed from the Paralympic Games:

*Dennis:* No, they'll never get rid of it [boccia], they can't get rid of it.

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Dennis:* because there would be too much of a protest. You've got to realise while you're in bed with this lot here [IOC] and you're playing the able-body image, you are still playing a political message with the old tribes. It would be too dangerous to get rid of that [boccia]. But they won't promote any more kinds of things for the more severely disabled.

In light of this assertion it's important to consider the relative power, including capital reserves, which 'the old tribes', namely national disability sport organisations, possess in the current Paralympic field. I would suggest the power of IOSDs is negligible compared to the capital resources and subsequent power possessed by the IOC, sponsorship and media sub-fields of the Paralympic field. I would argue if boccia was framed and accepted as being incompatible with the Paralympic Games and/or can be replaced with a more 'exciting' and profitable sport for severely impaired, then boccia would be removed. This would allow the IPC to display a sense of equality and portray that it represents athletes with severe impairments, yet at the same time reaping the capital profits from a sport which is seen to fit in better with what the IPC markets the Paralympic Games to be, namely a recognisably elite disability sport competition parallel to the Olympic Game. The sport of powerchair football, was mentioned by both Pádraig and Dennis as a sport with the potential to enter the Paralympic Games. Furthermore, during the interview process I was able to talk in-depth with Roger, an influential individual involved in both the development of powerchair football and continued efforts for powerchair football to be included as a sport in future Paralympic Games. This conversation with Roger helped provide an insight into a sport that I suggest could be a potential *replacement* for boccia in

future Paralympic Games. The main topics of discussion that emanated from this interview will now be outlined.

### Powerchair football: A Paralympic sport of the future?

When attempting to critically analyse the potential for powerchair football to become part of the Paralympic Games, it was firstly important to ascertain who Roger felt should compete in this sport. Talking in October 2009, Roger stated:

it [powerchair football] is aimed at...those who use a powerchair to play sport. For example we do have players who have spina bifada, that use splints to support them in walking. They don't need a powerchair for their daily life, but for when it comes to playing sport, they do to get physical activity because they can't get around quick enough to play any of the other games that are out there.

Thus instead of catering for a specific impairment group, powerchair footballers may possess a range of disabilities which necessitate the use of a powerchair to partake in sport. When talking with Roger it was clear that those involved in the development of powerchair football were keen to build a working relationship with the IPC sub-field, thereby enhancing this sport's possibilities of becoming part of the Paralympic Games. Roger outlined:

As a sport we're looking at some way of being included within the Paralympic Movement, hence the work around classification...so there's a lot of time being spent working with people from IPC who are involved in that...if we work collectively [with IPC] we can achieve a lot more, for example, with the likes of classification. The bloke who's doing it [representing powerchair football] was involved with us many, many years ago. His expertise were brought in for classification. He's a classifier for boccia and former GB coach for boccia so he has a performance record within disability sport at IPC level and he has contacts with people. He's an occupational therapist by trade so he has the understanding to be able to pull some of this together.

Here, the employment of this particular individual to act as mediator, between powerchair football and IPC, can be seen to stem from his possession of suitable cultural and social capital. The aforementioned individual has cultural

capital in the form of knowledge attained through his profession as well as his involvement in classification within boccia. This person can also utilise the social capital in the form of the 'contacts' which he has developed during his previous relations with IPC when lobbying on behalf of powerchair football. Powerchair football administrators actively sought to consult the IPC sub-field, specifically the AHSNC, regarding the potential viability of including this sport in future Paralympic Games:

we [powerchair football] did have discussions with the IPC severe disabilities committee [namely AHSNC] and it was because there are less and less Paralympic sports for people with severe disabilities, because in some ways they're probably not 'sexy' enough to show and get crowds. There's a lot of static sports [for severely impaired athletes], and they [AHSNC] see our sport [powerchair football]...to provide that activity for people with severe disabilities.

Here again the *type* of sport undertaken by athletes at the Paralympic Games can be seen as vital to enhancing their perceived eligibility for inclusion. Roger makes the important distinction that his sport is *active, not static* like boccia, arguably in an aim to portray powerchair football as more conducive to the 'sexy' style of disability sport which he perceives the IPC desires. In doing so Roger is attempting to identify the cultural capital associated with powerchair football as conducive to being transformed into the profitable symbolic capital that resonates from a privileged elite sporting competition. Moreover, Roger may also be attempting to market powerchair football as distinct from boccia, as the sport of boccia has arguably become synonymous with the visible presence of severe impairment, rather than elite sporting achievement.

Roger may believe he has to persuade IPC that powerchair football can overall be more profitable, than boccia, bearing in mind the economic capital costs entailed while developing and staging powerchair football events. When comparing the sports of boccia and powerchair football, Roger concedes he perceives powerchair football to have greater economic capital demands than boccia:

At the moment, I know for England [powerchair football team] when we went to the [powerchair] world cup, yes it was in Japan but it cost us £50,000 and that was about 8 players obviously with your support staff. If you talk about a boccia team that might be 6 players, 6 support staff, you could probably do it with 12, 14 people; whereas in powerchair football the minimum you're talking about is 20 people because of every player with support staff, then the coaching team, medics, that sort of thing. Then obviously you're adding to that the equipment. It's more cost effective to set up boccia than it is powerchair football.

However, if powerchair football is able to accrue the economic and symbolic profits sought by the IPC sub-field, in a more efficient manner than boccia, then the extra initial economic capital employed would seemingly be worth the investment. This is particularly the case bearing in mind the greater profits that powerchair football can potentially yield from attracting capital from, for example, the media and sponsorship sub-fields. These sub-fields are at present arguably not interested in investing in the sport of boccia.

I would suggest throughout the interview Roger appeared to desire a juxtaposed position, one in which powerchair football is perceived as a vital sport to include in the Paralympic Games as it serves a currently under-represented group of athletes, i.e. athletes with severe impairments. At the same time however, Roger wants people to ignore the severe impairments possessed by powerchair footballers and instead he emphasises that powerchair football is just like any other exciting sport. Are these two views of powerchair football that Roger desires complementary or conflicting? Alternatively are they in fact symptomatic of broader attempts by members of the Paralympic field, particularly the IPC sub-field, who wish to access the symbolic and economic profits accrued by credible, prestigious elite sporting events.

#### *Competing on two fields: Paralympic and mainstream*

Powerchair football has also been working with groups positioned outside of the Paralympic field. Specifically, Roger outlined: "we're working to get recognition by UEFA, FIFA. We're in some countries, England [powerchair football] being the first, that are recognised by their football

association". This course of action has been taken as Roger has strived to reduce the economic capital demands upon individuals wishing to participate in powerchair football. Roger stated:

[an] issue which is massive for the sport is finance...In powerchair football you have nearly £4,000 worth of wheelchair if they're at a competitive level. Before we start they [players] need £400 for a guard to fasten onto their own chair...so we're trying to work with the people who are developing the equipment so you can actually make it affordable and hopefully get more players playing.

Roger hopes to tap into capital-rich, elite able-bodied football clubs in an attempt to reduce the economic capital outlay for first-time powerchair footballers:

They [the FA] basically introduce us to different people...if we can get access to some of the finance involved in football it'll help. If teams can sponsor equipment to lower costs, if a premiership team, for example, sponsored a [powerchair football] team the chances are they could buy the [power]chairs, the equipment.

The attempts to develop a disability sport outside of the Paralympic field could result in athletes with a disability becoming more integrated into mainstream able-bodied sporting competitions, reducing the perceived barriers between able-bodied and disabled sportsmen/women. Alternatively however it may be the impaired athletes' perceived disability, rather than their sporting ability and performance, that becomes the main focus. This latter situation has had to be overcome by Roger during the development of powerchair football.

During conversation, Roger frequently emphasised his desire for powerchair football to first and foremost to be viewed as a sport, hoping to detract from what Roger perceived to be the more peripheral aspects of the sport; the most obvious of which being the disabilities of those involved. Roger stated: "we're [powerchair football] trying to show the likes of FIFA, IPC...the sport and not the disability bit". Roger was involved in the development of a sports powerchair, which was also intended to create a

level playing field so player ability rather than other factors, in this instance technology, could take centre stage:

what we've been able to do is develop with the manufacturer a wheelchair for wheelchair football. So in a sports powerchair...we actually have a speed limit...the way we've tried to do it, we didn't want it to be like the way F1 [Formula 1 motor racing] used to be, focussed on technology development and not player ability, so by having the speed limit that's one of the crucial elements, so it's coming down to player skill, what the game of football is about, and their ability, rather than the equipment they use.

Yet again the technology sub-field is significant in shaping how sports are practised, organised and perceived within the Paralympic field. Roger went on to highlight how, from his experience, the abilities of powerchair footballers often become subordinate to their disability. He outlined that the physically active nature of powerchair football is not appreciated, as how powerchair footballers compete is different to able-bodied footballers:

one of the other challenges is facing the images of disability, to say this [powerchair football] is a sport...This is currently the only active participation sport in the world for people who have severe disability and need a wheelchair. When we're talking about physical activity, people say we're [powerchair football] not physically active, we are, and they [players] come off court sweating. They're moving a joystick and asking themselves to do things they don't usually do. You're asking them to communicate, everything's moving and they have to respond, as in the game of [able-bodied] football. They might not be running up and down court but certainly the movement and what you're asking them to do is physical activity for them.

The differences between how able-bodied and disabled sports are organised and played are problematic and may obscure, as in this case, the perceived exertions of powerchair footballers. An individuals' habitus may merely focus on what the athlete is not doing, i.e. they are not running, not using their arms, rather than what they are doing, i.e. manoeuvring, communicating and reacting to game situations. An example of individuals focussing entirely on disability, rather than the sport of powerchair football, was provided by Roger who remarked:

we do have a [powerchair football] club that launched and were in a national magazine. But the photos they [the magazine] used were people pushing someone in a manual wheelchair. So it was showing the disability...what it didn't show was the sport element, so actually sport comes first.

Thus, reaffirming the potential for the media sub-field to fail to promote Paralympic sport in the sport-orientated, rather than disability-focussed, manner which it desires (Schell and Duncan, 1999; Schell and Rodriguez, 2001).

In relations with able-bodied football clubs, Roger expressed how he perceived it was the need for charity towards individuals with an impairment, rather than an appreciation of their sporting capabilities that, at times, took precedence:

we've done a lot of wasted time where people have rung up and said 'yes we want to do this' but they don't want to do it for what are the right reasons...they see it as good PR [public relations] and a money-making exercise. It's actually about the sport and the difference it makes to the players...We've had some professional [football] clubs involved in the past because it's good for PR [public relations]...because when you show the picture of disability football, when you say disability, most people think wheelchairs, so showing a pictorial version of wheelchair football and your team kit it does a good thing as a PR stunt.

Note here how the wheelchair is synonymous as a marker of disability within society as well as Roger illustrating how powerchair football risks being patronised as a charitable disability project, rather than developed as a credible sport in its own right. In doing so the economic capital received becomes viewed as a charitable donation, arguably incompatible with the assertion that powerchair football is a prestigious example of elite sporting competition and laced with symbolic capital encapsulated within other elite sports.

Throughout its development, powerchair football has sought to forge links with able-bodied sport and the Paralympic field, with Roger still unsure as to which sporting movement powerchair football should align itself with.



Roger contemplated: “Is Paralympics the way we want to go? If you look at football, the world cup is the biggest thing in football. We're a bit torn at the moment”. In interview Roger expressed he believes the Paralympic Games are *at present* the best site for powerchair football because of the financial support and media and/or sponsorship opportunities accessible through the Paralympic Games:

it's [the Paralympic Games] the pinnacle of disability sport, so when you talk to disabled sportspeople that's where they want to get to...I think there's a lot more support around the Paralympics...If we [powerchair football] get recognised by IPC and we get into Paralympic Games we will be supported by the English FA as a national team, because they've just reviewed all their squads, and the ones that have stayed are the ones in the Paralympic Movement, not just because of FA funding, but UK sport and performance funding, that's how its geared. It's offered as a package as in, it's Paralympic sport, and when you talk about media and sponsorship rights there's more things that seem to come with that...at the moment we're pushing down both routes, with the IPC specific stuff...but also down the football route.

Thus Roger is articulating the significance of the economic, and arguably the cultural and symbolic capital, available to powerchair football if it can successfully establish itself in the Paralympic field and build relationships with the IPC, media and sponsorship sub-fields. However powerchair football's position within future Paralympic Games is far from assured.

*Powerchair football's attempts to enter the Paralympic Games: Progress to date*

A key issue affecting powerchair football's attempts to become part of the Paralympic Games was the removal of demonstration events at the London 2012 Paralympic Games:

*Roger:* We [powerchair football] pushed to be a showcase demonstration sport for [London] 2012. But IPC took out demonstration sports for 2012[Paralympic Games].

*Interviewer:* Why do you feel IPC decided there weren't going to be any demonstration sports?

*Roger:* I think it's capacity, because they could have had lots and lots. I think this [London 2012] will be the first time there won't be demonstration sports...I think it [including demonstration sports] becomes more of an issue because they're [IPC] being pressured more on the [4000 quota] threshold of athletes...also I think there are financial pressures put on by countries [NPCs] saying 'we can't afford to pay for these non-medaling sports for demonstration'. We were saying we'll fund it all, and it'll only be a demonstration so it'll only be half a dozen teams but we'll do something to show the world this is what it is, but that's not the case now.

This episode serves to illustrate the problematic issues confronting any sport wishing to enter the Paralympic Games. The removal of demonstration sports from the Paralympic Games creates a closed shop in which existing Paralympic sports are protected as it arguably becomes more problematic for new Paralympic sports to prove their worth and justify their inclusion. Nevertheless, aware of the political nature of the IPC sub-field, powerchair football has sought to work with incumbent members of the IPC sub-field and tried to gain support for its inclusion through contacting current NPCs:

*Interviewer:* There's certainly lots of issues, including the difficulty in just getting a demonstration event. How difficult, do you think, it is going to be to actually get the sport [of powerchair football] accepted in [the Paralympic Games] as, with the athlete quota, sports are going to be fighting for their position

*Roger:* It'll come down to who can do what better than the others, and that's why for us, we gradually keep letting people know we're there and then when we're ready we'll look to make a push. We've actually written to every IPC country as an organisation, so we know they've received a brochure and DVD on what we are, who we are and what we do, because when it comes to a vote, they [NPCs] will be the ones making that vote.

The ability for powerchair football to enter the Paralympic field as a fully fledged member of the Paralympic Games ultimately depends on this negotiation with other members of the IPC sub-field. Again I would suggest there exists the need for powerchair football to emphasise the potential economic and symbolic capital which it perceives it can yield for the Paralympic field. Furthermore, as discussed previously, I see boccia's

position within the Paralympic Games as being undermined, not strengthened, by powerchair football's attempts to be included in the Paralympic Movement. To date, it remains uncertain whether powerchair football will be in the Paralympic Games in future.

Aside from the inclusion or removal of new and existing Paralympic sports, some interviewees also debated the potential to re-arrange existing Paralympic events/ sports in the future. These conversations will now be discussed.

### Re-arranging future Paralympic Games

Discussions with members of the Paralympic field stimulated ideas regarding how the current format of the Paralympic Games could be transformed overtime by re-locating existing Paralympic sports. This technique for creating space for new events in the Paralympic Games, while at the same time not preventing current Paralympic sports from being included in a Paralympic Games, was discussed with Michelle and Daniel. The idea presented to these interviewees was to move some sports currently part of the summer Paralympic Games into the comparatively smaller winter Paralympic Games thereby freeing up space for new sports in the Summer Paralympic Games. While potentially feasible Michelle felt this suggestion would fail to be implemented:

I think that's [winter Paralympic Games] where there is room to expand...there are only five sports on the winter side and less than 1000 athletes at the [winter Paralympic] Games...Could you move some of the sports over to the winter side of things, like rugby, basketball who's seasons are traditionally in the winter time?... I don't think that will happen, I don't think they'll [wheelchair rugby and wheelchair basketball] go for that, but I think there's more scope to develop on the winter side.

Thus, although Rugby union is traditionally a winter sport, this tradition is perceived as superfluous, perhaps in part due to the influence of the IOC sub-field where Rugby (7s) are set to be included in the 2016 summer Olympic Games (IOC, 2009b). In conversation with Daniel, while the idea of moving sports from the summer to the winter Paralympic Games was

deemed as possible, in theory, he also felt this change was unlikely to occur.

Daniel stated:

Certainly, sports like boccia and goalball could be held in the winter [Paralympic] Games...as these are both gymnasium based games. There would be the possibility of even moving a sport like swimming to a winter environment, assuming it's an indoor pool, but that would be a bigger stretch. Because both boccia and goalball are not held at the Olympic Games they could be included in the Winter Paralympic Games...Certainly in the last few years they've introduced curling as a new [winter] sport...I know there would be a push to include ambulatory ice hockey played by amputees...so I'm sure that the Winter Paralympic Games wants to expand the number of sports they're engaged in as well, so it's not just about simply shifting athletes from one [Paralympic] Games to another.

Both Daniel and Michelle express their perceived concerns surrounding this Paralympic sports relocation strategy and highlighted some of its limitations. Nevertheless, this technique may prove to be more attractive to certain Paralympic sports whose continued involvement in the Summer Paralympic Games perhaps appears precarious.

Although it has been deemed problematic to move sports from the summer to the winter Paralympic Games, some interviewees believed some Paralympians may find themselves jettisoned from the Summer Paralympic Games, as it is perceived these Paralympians can compete fairly with able-bodied athletes in mainstream sport. Subsequently some former Paralympians may find themselves without a Paralympic event and instead only given the opportunity to attempt to compete in the Olympic Games. In this regard, some visually impaired athletes were deemed capable of competing within able-bodied sport by several interviewees. For example, Jack stated: "For the visually impaired swimmer...there's three classifications within swimming. Why aren't they competing in the able-bodied world, because there's physically nothing wrong with them?" Here, the impact of impairment upon actual sporting performance is being debated; as a blind athlete will still possess full use of all their limbs and within a sport such as swimming can arguably still propel themselves through the water as quickly

as an able-bodied swimmer. The perception that the bodies of those with minimal visual impairment, as defined by the IPC, still possess the athletic prowess to perform to a similar level to able-bodied athletes was also asserted by Daniel. Daniel suggested B3 track athletes could potentially compete fairly against able-bodied runners at the Olympic Games:

[In future] there might be movement towards getting rid of B3s, for example, the highest functioning visual impaired group, because it's been proven time and time again, through cases like Marla Runyan<sup>49</sup>, that if you're a gifted [B3] athlete you can compete at the Olympic Games...if a woman who is a B3 can compete at the Olympics Games yes I don't believe there should be an event at the Paralympic Games.

This potential for current Paralympians to actually compete in the Olympic Games was also discussed with Trevor who argued:

we should be looking at sports like shooting and archery, where [disabled] competitors do and have competed in the Olympic Games and say have these sports now reached a... point where we're actually creating a second-rate competition [in the Paralympic Games], because these [impaired] people can compete on a level playing field in those two sports [shooting and archery] therefore let's take them out of the [Paralympic] programme and create space for some of the emerging [disability] sports.

For former Paralympians to compete within the Olympic Games can be viewed as a positive move, as the IOC and IPC sub-fields strive to achieve equitable sporting competitions consisting of disabled and able-bodied athletes competing within the same event. In doing so, it may be argued that the athlete's ability is being recognised as it is the athlete's sporting performance, rather than their impairment, that justifies their position within mainstream sport compared to an impairment-specific class/event in the Paralympic Games. Furthermore, I would suggest this addition of disabled athletes to the IOC sub-field helps ascribe some impaired bodies with the legitimate symbolic capital afforded to elite athletes competing at the Olympic Games. This can be seen to allow disabled athletes and disability sport in

general to amass the symbolic and economic capital deserving displays of elite sporting performance.

However this process of moving some disability sports and their impaired athletes into the Olympic Games is problematic. In doing so, are the Paralympic Games being devalued as it becomes seen as a proving ground for currently illegitimate athletic performances. This is because once Paralympians have proved capable of being assimilated within the able-bodied sports competition, there is no longer the need for the Paralympic competition, as these athletes are promoted to the Olympic Games. What effect will this strategy have upon the social perception and credibility of other Paralympic sports which do not fit into the Olympics and are never likely too because no Olympic equivalent exists and/or the presence and severity of impairment negates the possibility for certain athletes with a disability from competing fairly against able-bodied competitors. I would suggest there would be a significant difference in terms of the availability of both economic and symbolic capital for elite athletes with a disability competing at the Olympic Games compared to those competing at the Paralympic Games. This could serve to promote and perpetuate a hierarchy of impairment (Mastro et al. 1996; Sherrill, 1989) as some athletes with a disability are perceived to be worth more economic and symbolic capital than others.

The process of combining Olympic and Paralympic events could arguably be extended so that all Paralympic events/ sports were part of the Olympic Games, with the Paralympic Games ceasing to exist. The possible consequences of this occurring were discussed with members of the Paralympic field.

### The Olympic (and Paralympic) Games

The potential combination of the Olympic and Paralympic Games into a single sports event was widely discussed with interviewees. Edward perceived the closer alignment of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements to be a real possibility stating:

I think during the next 10-15 years there'll be a big breakthrough moment, whether that will be the Olympic rings will be adopted by the Paralympics or maybe 'higher stronger, faster' [motto] will be adopted. There may be some significant more tangible alignment or maybe it's just the naming that will change.

This is perhaps overly optimistic, especially in light of the historical battles between the IOC and IPC regarding the protection of the Olympic naming rights and Olympic rings (Bailey, 2008). Nevertheless, Edward felt that the full integration of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements would promote greater equality in other areas of society: "I think the opportunity is to...promote this notion of full integration...I think the more there is a shift in that direction, the more you will see a shift in society and greater equality overall whether it's employment or health care".

Other interviewees were concerned that the combination of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements would threaten sporting opportunities for athletes with an impairment. Cameron feared the IPC would be devoured by the IOC and subsequently reduce disability sport provision within individual nations: "The threat could be that the IPC join the IOC and get eaten up and in the nations [NPCs] play second fiddle [to the NOCs]; NPCs start to disappear and then nobody does anything for Paralympic sport". Patrick was keen to stress his belief that there was a need to maintain separation between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Without this divide Patrick felt Paralympians would be marginalised by able-bodied Olympians, with the performances of impaired athletes being obscured: "There was talk sometime ago about merging it [Olympic and Paralympic Games] into one event and for me the actual athletes with a disability would be lost within the Olympic Movement". Thus the cultural and symbolic capital, stemming from being a recognisable Olympian, would remain the preserve of able-bodied rather disabled athletes. Furthermore, Teresa felt that instead of just being ignored, the current cohort of Paralympians would be thinned if forced to compete at the Olympic Games:

I worry very much that people in the big decision making roles think the future for Paralympic sport is to be part of the IOC and

I just don't think the people in those decision-making roles understand Paralympic sport enough to realise that will lead to an even greater narrowing of the groups of disabled people that will then be able to compete.

Again, Jack perceived that athletes with more severe impairments could be culled as the IOC selected the athletes and events they perceived to be worthy of inclusion:

I can't see in the short to medium term an amalgamation of the two [Olympic and Paralympic Games], because what would happen is you would cherry pick, you would actually only have the events which have the least disabled people in there, so I think you would lose [severely impaired] people.

The argument being portrayed by interviewees appears to be that those disability sports and athletes with a disability who are perceived to possess and accrue potential economic and symbolic capital could be included in the Olympic Games. However, those impaired athletes whose cultural capital is judged to not be easily transferable into economic and symbolic profits may find themselves marginalised or even excluded. As such, the combination of the IOC and IPC could further exasperate the issue of some impairment groups dominating disability sport, as these impaired bodies are deemed to produce sporting achievements which are perceived to be representative of elite sport performances.

The competing arguments expressed on this issue were succinctly combined by Trevor who stated:

You talk to the uninitiated and they say 'oh there should just be one Games; Olympics and Paralympics'...philosophically we all subscribe to it. Practically it's never going to happen, and would we want it to happen because we'd lose this magnificent festival of Paralympic sport which just not only celebrates Paralympic sport but celebrates disability and all those things, but we also run the risk of in time perhaps people in leadership seeing Paralympic sport as something they didn't want to have, and it would go, and we'd never have the opportunity then to reinvent, to re-establish all the infrastructure that supports the Paralympic Games in its current form as the follow-on for the Olympic Games.



Trevor acknowledges Edward's desire for full integration on the basis of procuring social equality for disabled people, while reiterating previous concerns emphasising the need to maintain the Paralympic Game as separate to the Olympic Games. He sees this separation as a means of self-preservation for the Paralympic Movement which he fears may become open to re-structuring and dismantling if consumed by the Olympic Movement. Thus Trevor is encouraging the Paralympic Movement to appreciate what it has achieved so far. Furthermore, he is wary that the Paralympic legacy is safeguarded during the continued development of the Paralympic Games, as individuals and groups compete within and outside of the many sub-fields that combine to comprise the Paralympic field. Some interviewees expressed their hopes for the London 2012 legacy. These comments will now be considered.

#### Hopes for London 2012 Legacy

When discussing the possible futures for the Paralympic Games, many interviewees wanted to talk about the potential legacy from the upcoming London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Nathan hoped that London 2012 would create accessible infrastructure around England's capital city, which all disabled people would benefit from:

the infrastructure around, and to, the Olympic site...has the potential to have a massive impact upon improving the lot of disabled people in London, because it [accessible infrastructure] will become the norm and it [London] will become an easier place to get around, and that might be its [London 2012's] real long term legacy, to show what modern architecture can achieve...the Olympic facilities will all be accessible, so rather than struggling to the poolside there will be a couple of pools which will be readily accessible for London which is fantastic and I think that will be great and there will be sport stadia, gyms all of these things will have great access.

This hope is very revealing of both the perceived power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to change society and the perceived paucity of existing infrastructure for disabled people. Firstly, it is overly simplistic to believe that a particular environment is accessible and ideal for *all* impairment groups. For example, while a gentle slope may be perceived as essential for allowing

wheelchair users to move about independently, individuals with cerebral palsy may find shallow steps with a handrail alongside easier to use, while individuals with a visual impairment would benefit from some form of warning, perhaps raised bumps on the pavement, to inform them that a slope is being approached. Finally neither deaf people nor individuals with a learning impairment can be seen to benefit from the introduction of a modified physical environment, so the specificity of impairment should not be overlooked. Secondly, Nathan is asserting there exists a real paucity of provision for disabled people, to the extent that the addition of two swimming pools, accessible to impaired individuals, represents real progress for disabled people. It is surprising that Nathan has faith in a quadrennial sporting competition such as the Olympic Games to create significant change in terms of how future accessible buildings will be constructed, given the perceived lack of accessible infrastructure in London created by disability legislation, including the 1995 disability discrimination act, later updated in April 2005 (Shakespeare, 2006). It may be asked why and how can a sporting competition lasting a matter of weeks create the change in infrastructure seemingly needed, when decades of government legislation have failed to address issues surrounding accessible environments for individuals with an impairments.

In regards to the potential for the Paralympic Games to leave a lasting legacy and assist in the development of accessible infrastructure, Trevor suggested that in his opinion the London 2012 Paralympic Games could serve to test out technology that would benefit both Paralympians, but also possess the potential to help individuals with a visual impairment navigate urban environments. Trevor outlines:

They're [NPCs] finding it difficult to find people to run with blind athletes over the longer distances, they're allowed three people in the marathon now. On the track that's even worse. So they're even talking in the longer distances of having some sort of bleep system round the track to let them [athletes] know where they're running, so they could actually run on their own. And you can see that technology then being transferred to the streets, to the community.

While this would be a promising development, certainly in the short-term I believe this technology, even if eventually used within the Paralympic Games, will only be utilised within urban environments if the outlay of economic capital can be justified. Similarly, Paralympians compete with state of the art light weight prostheses and wheelchairs, yet this does not automatically mean that all disabled people have access to these resources for their daily living. Nevertheless Trevor's suggestion does raise the prospect of the Paralympic Games being a potential training ground for technology which may one day prove useful in the everyday lives of disabled people.

The media sub-field, during the 2012 Paralympic Games, was highlighted as potentially facilitating further Paralympic legacies. Cameron hopes the awareness generated by the media coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games will be maintained and help drive an increase in participation of Paralympic sports, in particular in wheelchair basketball:

hosting it [the Paralympic Games] in Britain you hope that that media coverage will then continue because people will start to understand [Paralympic] sports...2012 isn't just about those Paralympic teams...it's about using it [2012 Paralympic Games] as a driver to find more athletes across the board to take part in [wheelchair basketball] clubs.

Again this aspiration for the London 2012 Paralympic Games remains a possibility, but this hope is at risk from able-bodied sports post-London 2012 eroding spectatorship of Paralympic sports<sup>50</sup>. The hope that the media can be used to disseminate information about Paralympic sport, in an attempt to increase awareness and interest in Paralympians and Paralympic sports, was also shared by Trevor who stated:

one thing that London [2012] wants to do for the Olympics and Paralympics is to get a more informed spectator group both those who actually physically attend and those who watch through television...One of the pieces that we're trying to do in London [2012], in terms of sports presentation, is to try to ensure that the audience understands what they're seeing and I think that will be a massive help in terms of the promotion of the more severely disabled athletes in the Paralympic Movement

and the Paralympic Games, because it will give us an opportunity in sports like boccia and in athletics to explain why this is an elite sport...it's about the ability to control your body, to enable it to do precisely what you want it to do in a very efficient and consistent way and that is what elite sport is about isn't it.

Here Trevor hopes the London 2012 Paralympic Games can educate and interest spectators about Paralympic sport, again seeking to translate the cultural capital of being a Paralympian into the symbolic capital afforded to prestigious elite athletes. It remains to be seen if London 2012 can achieve this objective or instead encounters apathy as spectators' desire excitement, not a detailed insight into the impairments, classification systems and adapted rules which affect Paralympians' performances.

Other interviewees hoped that the London 2012 Paralympic Games could be used to educate the wider population about the need for social change toward how disability and disabled people are perceived within society. Although believing London 2012 represented a chance to change the social perception of disability within British culture, Jack was unsure as to who was going to take responsibility for making sure this opportunity is not squandered: "we've got a real chance to make a change, but then the question is who's going to be the key drivers moving that forwards...should that be Paralympics GB, should that be national governing bodies, should that be media?". Teresa expressed her hope that a coalition between Paralympians competing at the London 2012 Paralympic Games and the disability rights activists could yield social change for disabled people:

I am determined that London 2012 starts to make this link between Paralympic athletes and the disability rights movement, because they [Paralympians] could be a group who are incredibly influential in shifting the focus away once and for all from 'these are athletes and let's talk about their impairments' to 'these are athletes who are fantastically successful and representing this country'. But there's a job to do for the disability rights community to shift its thinking I think.

In closing here Teresa acknowledges the potential conflict in interests and views that exist between Paralympians and disability rights campaigners (as explored in chapter 7). The messages that Paralympians and disability rights

groups wish to voice may be contradictory. For example will the presence of impairment be emphasised to help members of disability community identify more easily with Paralympians? Alternatively will both Paralympians and disability rights activists wish for the attention given to impairment to be lessened, thereby emphasising that impairment is only one small aspect of an individual's identity? The ability of athletes and activists to agree on a common message will significantly impact upon the ability of the Paralympic Movement to work more closely with disability rights campaigners in the future. This re-alignment could result in the disability rights sub-field playing a more significant role than at present, and perhaps see the apparent dominance of the IOC sub-field over the Paralympic field lessen. From the dataset the future of the Paralympic Games can be seen to remain a contested terrain.

### Summary

This chapter has endeavoured to explore some potential opportunities and threats which lay ahead for the Paralympic Movement, as envisaged by members of the Paralympic field. The potential for adding and/or removing sports/events from the Paralympic Games was discussed. A potential Paralympic sport of the future, namely powerchair football, was used to explore some of the issues facing Paralympic sports wishing to enter the Paralympic Games. The possibility of re-arranging existing Paralympic sports to generate space for more Paralympic sports was critically analysed, before considering the views of members of the Paralympic field about combining the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Finally some of the aspirations for the London 2012 Paralympic Games legacy, as expressed by interviewees, were briefly discussed.

Interviewee speculation about the future of the Paralympic field re-affirmed the continued importance of debating what should be the purpose(s) of the Paralympic Games in the future. While some individuals argued the Paralympic Games can and should be used for addressing social issues of accessible infrastructure and disability rights for disabled people, others wished for Paralympians to be seen as elite sportspeople and used primarily

to grow Paralympic sport participation. Inadvertently referring to the competition within a field, as well as a field's susceptibility to change from the entry of individuals and groups (Bourdieu, 1993; 1998a), Dennis stated: "what you've got to try and take into to account while this [the Paralympic Movement] is moving on, besides having a nature of its own in here and having the key individual players playing it like that, other ideas are being brought into it". As the Paralympic field continues to be transformed the topics and ideas discussed throughout these discussion chapters will remain in flux and react to the existing relations of groups within the Paralympic field, as well as being influenced by the potential entry and exit of individuals and groups to the Paralympic field in the future. The overall conclusions drawn from this research will now be discussed.

## **Conclusion**

### **Research Aim and Objectives: Revisited**

This project fulfilled the research aim and objectives. The research aim was fulfilled by utilising Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to critically analyse the Paralympic Games. Research objectives were also met. This thesis identified, and explored the relationships between, the core constituents involved in shaping the Paralympic Movement. A cartographic representation and critical analysis of the Paralympic field are testament to this. Some perceived purposes of the Paralympic Games were explored using the dataset. The suitability of bodies with different impairments to be vehicles for an elite sports competition was considered. Finally potential future developments for the Paralympic Movement were discussed. Concluding statements on the methodology used for this project will now be outlined.

### **Methodological Review**

In light of research findings (chapters 7-10) and the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this researcher (chapter 5), the use of qualitative research methods, in the form of semi-structured interviews, can be considered both relevant and beneficial. The dataset of opinions and lived experiences, gathered from members of the Paralympic field, provided a fertile resource to sociologically critique social perceptions of the Paralympic Games.

This research could have been carried out in a number of ways. Some alternative research methods were considered but ultimately rejected for this project. Documentary research, which could include the use of sport policy publications and/or written media articles, was considered inappropriate for several reasons. Documents possess fixed data (Scott, 1990) whereas interview responses can be explored to greater depths with probing questions (Gibson and Brown, 2009; May, 2002). As a document is a socially constructed account, rather than a neutral truth, it fails to fully remove the possibility of biased and inaccurate data (Bryant, 2005). For example, the

tendency for media to sensationalise reports (Stead, 2003) arguably limits the validity of some media articles. Most importantly, documentary research only analyses how the data was presented to a reader, it does not account for subjective interpretations of documents which can cause the same information to be deciphered and acted upon in different ways.

Another approach that could have been adopted was the oral history method (Perks, 1995) which could have been used to gather interviewee experiences of the Paralympic Movement. However, oral histories were considered to lack the focus required to ensure interviews could be conducted in an efficient and effective manner to secure relevant data with which to explore the Paralympic field.

Focus groups, instead of individual semi-structured interviews could have been conducted, to actively engage individuals in critical thinking and cross examination, rather than critical questioning stemming solely from the researcher. However, it was felt in a group environment individuals would lose their anonymity and may be less forthcoming regarding expressing their personal opinions and experiences. Furthermore, it is possible that an individual could dominate and/or intimidate other interviewees stifling responses from other group members. The logistics of gathering together a group in the same location, at the same time, may also have been problematic.

The use of semi-structured interviews to gather opinions may be considered by some as problematic (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Attitudes can be considered changeable or stubbornly defended regardless of contrary evidence. Furthermore, opinions may not be put into practice as individuals merely adopt a pragmatic and/or socially acceptable response to a particular issue (Gratton and Jones, 2004). As such, conducting semi-structured interviews may be perceived as unreliable as the same responses may not be attained if the study was replicated. It is hoped that the interviewees and their peers are, following this research, more informed about the social perceptions of Paralympic sport. This research did not intend to indoctrinate and coerce members of the Paralympic field to think a certain way. Instead it



is hoped that the need to think sociologically, to consider the social perceptions and issues facing the Paralympic Games, has been embraced and shared via members of the Paralympic field interviewed. The significant empirical results of this research will now be summarised.

### Empirical results

The empirical results of this research have, through critical analysis, generated a sociological understanding of disability and elite sport within the context of the Paralympic Games. Sociological analysis of individual perceptions regarding the purpose of the Paralympic Games (chapter 7) gave an insight into what is at stake, and what stakes are being competed for, in the Paralympic field (Bourdieu, 1978). Research findings suggested the importance of the Paralympic Games being a stage where impaired bodies could be seen to be rehabilitated (Anderson, 2003; Guttman, 1976) had some relevance today. However, the findings argue that the Paralympic Games is, and should be seen as, more than just a vehicle to facilitate therapeutic sporting rehabilitation of impaired bodies. The purpose of the Paralympic Games acting as a recognisably elite disability sport event for elite athletes with a disability was significant. According to the empirical results there is debate surrounding whether Paralympians' supposedly elite sporting performances should be seen in the context, or in isolation, of their impairment and any corresponding disability.

Findings suggest some people desire the Paralympians' sporting performances to be the sole focal point, while others felt Paralympic sport was more than just 'sport' as it exuded emotion and the capacity to educate by Paralympians' seemingly overcoming their disabilities. Focus on physicality, rather than sporting performance, was considered derisory by some interviewees. The role of the media sub-field<sup>51</sup> in reporting Paralympic achievements as both super-crip (Berger, 2004) and human interest, rather than sports, stories (Schantz and Gilbert, 2001) was deemed problematic by some individuals interviewed. Findings suggest these media reporting techniques served both to limit the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1997) stemming from being perceived as a credible elite *sportsman/woman*, and

reduced to anecdote (Bourdieu, 1998a) Paralympian's performances which some hoped could be used to achieve social change for disabled people (Steadward and Foster, 2003).

The ability of Paralympians to be activists for social change was debated. Empirical results suggest the lifestyle and desire for recognition as an athlete first and foremost were seen as inhibiting Paralympic athletes from being activists, especially as they operate as a minority within a Paralympic field where the majority of members are able-bodied. This research found Paralympic athletes were seen to act as sporting role models encouraging greater participation in Paralympic sport by those with similar impairments. Yet, empowerment through Paralympic sport was seen as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997) largely exclusive to the Paralympian, inaccessible to the broader disability community, intensifying an apparent ideological disconnection between disabled people and Paralympians (Huang and Brittain, 2006). These empirical results question the actual significance and role of the disability rights sub-field within the Paralympic field.

The importance of physicality (DePauw, 1997) and capital relations within the Paralympic field (Bourdieu, 1993; 1997) were apparent within the research findings as the suitability of impaired bodies as vehicles for elite disability sport (chapter 8) was discussed. Findings suggest the amalgamation of differently impaired bodies at the Paralympic Games was a basis for competing social interpretations of the suitability of impaired bodies to be viable vehicles with which to stage an elite disability sport event. It was perceived the Paralympic Games needed quality and quantity of athletic talent to generate elite sporting competition. Research findings suggest small Paralympic athlete populations and narrow participation pyramids seemed to have detrimental effects upon Paralympians' claims of being elite sportsmen/women. Empirical results assert attempts to provide small athlete populations' opportunities to compete at Paralympic Games were limited by an over-emphasis on Paralympic sport among national disability sport organisations and NPCs pre-occupation with winning medals.

To overcome small athlete populations, interviewees proposed two strategies namely reducing the event specialisation of Paralympians and/or combining athlete classes. Both strategies could be considered problematic when attempting to lace Paralympians with the symbolic, and potential economic, capital that emanates from being a legitimate elite athlete. Combining classes was a divisive issue, according to research findings, due to the potential for impairment groups to be removed or systematically disadvantaged by having to compete with differently impaired athletes (Howe, 2008a). Research results reveal that loss of fair competition within the Paralympic field was considered by some to be a worthwhile trade-off to create a certain package of sporting performance to be exhibited at the Paralympic Games. This arguably illustrates the importance placed upon attracting economic and symbolic capital over the provision and assurance of fair competition for all Paralympians. Paradoxically, this practice serves to eventually lead to the Paralympic Games losing credibility, as athletic competitions become viewed as systemically disadvantaging certain individuals with impairment type, rather than athletic talent, determining who wins and who does not even make the start line.

In relation to which bodies should be allowed to compete within the Paralympic field, some interviewees expressed the existence of essentially two types of Paralympians. Firstly, individuals perceived to deserve to compete at the Paralympic Games because they face intense competition from a large population of athletes within their event. Secondly, Paralympians who compete within small athlete populations but are justified for inclusion by acting as Paralympic sporting role models, attempting to provide their athletic class with a chance to expand.

The importance of identifying with a particular impairment group within the Paralympic field, rather than the broad category of 'disabled people' (Oliver, 1990) was significant within the empirical results. The possible existence of a hierarchy of impairments (Deal, 2003; Mastro et al. 1996) within the Paralympic field was arguably evident from the consensual and conflicting relations between different disability tribes. Both ID athletes and

athletes with physical impairments were perceived to be competing *against* one another, using stereotypes and creating polemical images of each other in attempts to preserve or transform power relations (Bourdieu, 1998a) within the Paralympic field.

Findings suggest ID athletes are subject to significant opposition from some members of the Paralympic field. Some ID athletes were viewed as too severely impaired and therefore not identifiable as elite athletes. Alternatively they were perceived as not impaired enough and as a result not identifiable as disabled. Arguments opposing ID athletes' entry to the Paralympic field could be seen to be predicated on the social stigma of intellectual disabilities, with the failings of the INAS-FID classification at Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games (Bailey, 2008) a common reason used to justify arguments wishing to prevent ID athletes being involved in the Paralympic Games. This was the case, even though the reliability of the classification of athletes with physical impairments has been questioned within the literature (Sherrill, 1999; Tweedy, 2002). Since interview ID athletes have been reinstated for the 2012 Paralympic Games (IPC, 2009a). The concerns and criticisms of ID athletes expressed in the empirical results remain pertinent to influencing how their sporting performances are valued in terms of the volume and types of capitals they amass.

This research revealed that certain Paralympians may be perceived to be more lucrative than others (Abberley, 1996; Bertling and Schierl, 2008) in terms of the capital they yield for certain members of the Paralympic field. The athletic performances of athletes with CP were deemed problematic, with their corporeal mannerisms at times deemed uncontrolled/uncoordinated. These images are in conflict with the image of Paralympic sport that the IPC, media, sponsorship and IOC sub-fields were perceived to wish to promote. Empirical results suggested boccia was perceived as a rare Paralympic stage where athletes' with severe cerebral palsy performances were visible. However, this research found inclusion in the Paralympic Games did not instantly translate boccia into being perceived as an elite disability sport played by *athletes* with a disability. To perceive boccia players as elite

athletes was considered to require individual habitus to make sophisticated distinctions between what constitutes elite sporting performance across different sports. This is particularly relevant when comparing sports which rely heavily on sport-specific skills and strategies, rather than physical strength, endurance and power.

Empirical results reported some believed performances by lower class athletes and/or athletes with high support needs are deemed inferior because of the implications of impairments upon these individuals' abilities to compete either independently or in a similar manner to more able Paralympians. Findings suggest AHSNC was perceived to be unnecessary and/or was ignored by disability sport administrators.

The prioritising of impaired bodies that could be vehicles with which to promote elite disability sport at the Paralympic Games was pertinent, according to this research, when considering the role of the media sub-field and aesthetically pleasing sporting performances (Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). Findings suggest the media sub-field is perceived to demand IPC and athlete sub-fields to produce sporting products that possess specific attributes deemed conducive to identifying the Paralympic Games as a credible example of elite disability sport. Some interviewees believed athletes with a disability were subject to a form of media-orientated body fascism (Abberley, 1996; Bertling and Schierl, 2008), as athletes with a disability considered more aesthetically pleasing when competing were promoted over others. Issues of corporeal acceptability and the desire for, and use of, aesthetically pleasing sporting bodies within the Paralympic field were asserted by this researcher's findings. This was apparent as some individuals perceived Paralympian Eleanor Symmonds had received a disproportionate amount of media attention because she was considered an aesthetically pleasing and acceptable face for the Paralympic athlete sub-field. Furthermore, the importance of the Paralympic Games being a sporting spectacle (Cashman and Darcy, 2008b) was considered significant to this issue. Chapter 8 closed by reflecting that a situation could occur whereby the vast capital resources of the media and sponsorship sub-fields dominate

decision-making taken in the IPC sub-field with those bodies not deemed viable vehicles for elite disability sport jettisoned from the Paralympic field.

Chapter 9 illustrated the perceived significance of the IOC sub-field within the Paralympic field. Findings assert the Paralympic Movement has benefited from the contractual agreements made between IPC-IOC (IPC, 2010e), use of Olympic infrastructure and receipt of substantial economic capital from IOC (Mason, 2002). However, results also reveal some perceived this economic capital received by IPC from IOC to be problematic. This was because the capital was deemed to resemble a charitable donation and was perceived as a method of generating positive social perceptions of the IOC's values and morals. Findings reported beliefs that there existed, and remains, a desire by the IOC to retain a degree of distance from the Paralympic Movement, in an attempt to monopolize and conserve capital (Bourdieu, 1993) stemming from the Olympic brand. Empirical results revealed concerns that the IOC sub-field was influencing IPC's judgements relating to which individuals were perceived as credible examples of elite Paralympic athletes with a disability. Findings suggest by promoting the message that Paralympians are the *same* as Olympians, IPC serves to disenfranchise those impaired bodies which appear significantly different from able-bodied Olympians, i.e. those with severe impairments. The paradox between Paralympians being labelled the same as Olympians was evident from the results. Subsequently, there exists the need to promote Paralympians' performances differently to Olympians. Olympians, especially when winning an event, are arguably often cast as superhuman individuals who have overcome many barriers. For Paralympians to receive the same coverage perpetuates the supercrip image (Berger, 2004; Howe, 2008a) that an individual with a disability can overcome all of society's barriers if employing sufficient effort, thereby disenfranchising many disabled people. It was suggested that the economic and cultural capital that the Paralympic Games yields is increased through its association with the Olympic Games, but the disparities between the two sports competitions should not be understated. Findings reported the perceived need for Paralympic pride to

safeguard the Paralympic Movement's own identity as separate to the Olympic Movement.

Research findings explored the potential co-existence of able-bodied and disabled athletes within the same sport (e.g. Paracycling) and/or sports competition (e.g. Paralympians joining Olympic Games). Some potential impacts, both positive and negative, of Oscar Pistorius striving to compete in the Olympic Games were discussed in the context of the image/status of Paralympic Games and social perceptions of so-called cyborg athletes (Swartz and Watermeyer, 2008). The findings of these discussions give an insight into some of the issues facing integration of impaired and able-bodied athletes whose sporting performances can, at times, be perceived as incomparable.

Finally chapter 10 revealed findings concerning the potential future developments for the Paralympic Movement. Empirical results provided an insight into members of the Paralympic field own speculations regarding which sports/events would be included to and/or removed from future Paralympic Games. Research findings documented discussion of the inclusion of athletes with intellectual impairments to, and the possible loss of boccia from, Paralympic Games. Tensions created by Paralympic sports having to compete against each other to get included into the Paralympic Games, in particular due to the athlete quota of around 4000 were also explored. Inclusion of intellectually impaired athletes was seen to be conducive with a desire to portray Paralympians who compete in an aesthetically pleasing manner (Bertling and Schierl, 2008), while at the same time marginalising athletes with severe cerebral palsy.

Research findings suggested that if boccia was framed and accepted as incompatible with the Paralympic Games and/or could be replaced with an 'exciting' and more profitable sport for severely impaired, then boccia could be removed. Empirical results contributed an insightful account of Powerchair football, arguably a powerchair-based equivalent of football with the potential to enter the Paralympic Games. During an interview with a key stakeholder of powerchair football, it was suggested that Powerchair football should be

promoted as a vital sport to include in the Paralympic Games as it serves a currently under-represented group of athletes, i.e. athletes with severe impairments. At the same time however, there was a reported desire by those developing powerchair football for people to ignore the severe impairments possessed by powerchair footballers, instead emphasising that powerchair football is just like any other exciting sport. During the interview the important distinction that powerchair football is active, not static like boccia, was arguably aimed at portraying powerchair football as more conducive to the style of elite disability sport which it is perceived the IPC desires. On the basis of the broader research findings I would argue there exists the need for powerchair football to emphasise the potential economic and symbolic capital which it perceives it can yield if it is to be fully accepted within the Paralympic field.

The potential reconfiguration of Paralympic sports/ events was discussed. Although it has been deemed problematic to move sports from the Summer to the Winter Paralympic Games, findings suggest some Paralympians could find themselves jettisoned from the Summer Paralympic Games, as it is perceived these Paralympians can compete fairly with able-bodied athletes in mainstream sport. Research findings suggest some impaired athletes may be perceived capable of competing within able-bodied sport, such as, visually impaired long distance runners and/or wheelchair users currently competing in archery and shooting. In light of these research findings, I argue there exists a significant difference in terms of the availability of both economic and symbolic capital for elite athletes with a disability competing at the Olympic Games, compared to those competing at the Paralympic Games. This could serve to promote and perpetuate a hierarchy of impairment (Mastro et al. 1996; Sherrill, 1989) as some athletes with a disability are perceived to be worth more economic and symbolic capital than others.

Significantly, findings suggested the process of combining Olympic and Paralympic events could arguably be extended so that all Paralympic events/ sports were part of the Olympic Games, with the Paralympic Games



ceasing to exist. Empirical results revealed concerns that this combination of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements would threaten sporting opportunities for athletes with impairments, with the current cohort of Paralympians becoming thinned if all Paralympians were forced to compete at the Olympic Games. Findings suggested it was perceived that athletes with more severe impairments could be culled as the IOC selected athletes and events they perceived to possess cultural capital capable of being transferred into economic and symbolic profits. The combination of the IOC and IPC was envisaged to further exasperate the issue of some impairment groups dominating disability sport, as some, not *all*, impaired bodies are deemed to produce sporting performances representative of elite sport. Finally, this chapter by reflecting on the hopes for the London 2012 Paralympic Games legacy revisited the range of purposes which members of the Paralympic field envisage are attainable (see chapter 7) including creation of accessible infrastructure and Paralympic sports capitalizing on the awareness generated by the media coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

Overall empirical results supported the assertion that a Paralympic field exists. Interviewees referred to the involvement and influence of the eight sub-fields which together make up the Paralympic field. Arguably, the fields with the most influence, in light of these research findings are: the IPC, IOC, athlete, media and sponsorship sub-fields. The significance of the technology, disability rights and rehabilitation sub-fields was explored to some extent via the interviews, and arguably still have a role to play in the development of the Paralympic Movement. The need for an assembly line of impaired bodies with which to create sporting competitions, which utilise the latest performance enhancing technology, and allegedly empower others; maintains the rehabilitation, technology and disability rights sub-fields' respective importance to the overall operation of the Paralympic field. Inevitably, the constituents and positions occupied within the Paralympic field will change in future. For example, the entry to, exit from and movement within by members and organisations in the IPC sub-field is to be expected as sports are added and/ or removed from the Paralympic Games. The

athlete sub-field is always subject to considerable change in terms of personnel and it will be interesting to see the proportions in terms of type and range of impairments possessed by Paralympians in years to come, given the tensions surrounding creating a purportedly elite sporting spectacle.

Although this research has not explored sporting and governmental policy, it has highlighted the tensions surrounding decisions taken when creating a certain package of Paralympic sport. The perceived suitability of certain impaired bodies over others when choosing which athletes and sporting events to include in the Paralympic Games is immensely significant. From this research it is apparent that IPC is deemed responsible for maintaining a diverse selection of impaired athletes are included in the Paralympic Games as NDSOs and athletes focus on winning medals, not necessarily developing broader participation in disability sport (chapter 8). While it is the remit of IPC to govern the Paralympic Games, decisions to market the Paralympians as the same as Olympians and to become ever closer entwined with the IOC, according to this research, can be seen to be detrimental for some impaired bodies. Instead of developing elite sporting opportunities for all athletes with a disability it may be considered that a type of hierarchy of impairments (Mastro et al, 1996) is being systematically implemented as aesthetically pleasing recognisably elite athletes with a disability dominate other impaired bodies including, athletes with high support needs and arguably athletes with CP (chapter 8). This research has explored some of the perceived potential consequences of this strategy, which acts as a warning for future decisions taken regarding the continued development of the Paralympic Movement (chapter 10).

To conclude, when talking about sport Bourdieu (1978) states: “this field [sport] is itself part of the larger field of struggles over the definition of the *legitimate body* and the *legitimate use of the body*” (p.826). Although not referring exclusively to disability sport this assertion is relevant to understanding the Paralympic field. Assertions about *which* bodies have a legitimate claim to be involved in Paralympic sport, alongside how impaired bodies are used to create an elite disability sport spectacle such as the

Paralympic Games, remain contested. Members and organisations continually strive to influence, through consensus and conflict, the development of the Paralympic field. The research findings contained in this document help shed light on some issues facing the development of the Paralympic Movement. The contributions to theory made by this research will now be outlined.

### Theoretical contributions

Several potential contributions to theory can be highlighted in respect to this research. This project contributes to the sociology of sport literature in which relatively limited sociological research into Paralympic sport has been conducted (Brittain, 2010; DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Gilbert and Schantz, 2008; Howe, 2008a; Thomas and Smith, 2009). Through exploring the social perceptions of supposedly elite sporting performances created by differently impaired bodies, this research has contributed to literature investigating the sociology of the impaired body (DePauw, 1997; Hughes and Patterson, 1997; Patterson and Hughes, 1999; Shilling, 2003). This project re-emphasised the social meaning encapsulated within differently impaired bodies rather than perpetuating a disembodied view of disability (Pateron and Hughes, 1999). The ability of Paralympians to use their bodies to be perceived and receive capital that is comparable with that bestowed upon elite able-bodied athletes was explored. Thus, instead of disabled athletes being viewed as a homogeneous minority group resulting from social stratification, Paralympians were perceived differently based on their impairments and perceived ability to produce supposedly elite sporting achievements performed in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Through utilising Bourdieu's understanding of habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) this project has sought to address the false dichotomies often emanating from the Cartesian dualism of mind/body (Pateron and Hughes, 1999).

By using Bourdieu's sociological theory, this investigation has demonstrated the suitability of using habitus, capital and field in Paralympic social research, concepts which have hitherto had limited use (Howe, 2008a; Petri-Uy, 2008). The exploration of the social perceptions surrounding the

development of the Paralympic field could encourage others to use Bourdieu's sociological theory when studying disability and sport and/or other sporting movements. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field provide the researcher with a way to circumnavigate the false and counter-productive dichotomies of normal-abnormal, and able-disabled which have been frequently employed within disability research (Linton, 2006; Oliver, 1990).

This research has made a contribution to the growing literature documenting the social issues faced during the development of the Paralympic Movement (Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2010; Guttmann, 1976; Howe, 2008a; Scruton, 1998; Thomas and Smith, 2009). The research also contributes to literature on the Olympic Movement (Guttmann, 2002; Lenskyj, 2000) as the Olympic and Paralympic Games have, to some extent, become increasingly linked through IOC-IPC agreements (Mason, 2002). This project has re-affirmed the need to appreciate differences both within the Paralympian population and when elite athletes with a disability are compared with able-bodied counterparts. In particular, broadly generalising Paralympians as the same as Olympians has been highlighted to disenfranchise Paralympians and individuals with a disability rather than acting as a tool to promote equity between able-bodied and disabled bodies.

#### Scope and limitations of research

A key strength of this research lies in combining Bourdieu's sociological theory (chapter 4) and literature documenting the development of the Paralympic Movement (chapter 2) to create the concept of the Paralympic field. This concept, alongside the accompanying cartographic representation, allows the Paralympic field to help delimit and conceptualise the Paralympic Movement for others. In doing so, other avenues of sociological research are apparent with each sub-field and its relation to the Paralympic Movement being fertile sites at which to explore how the Paralympic field operates.

This research provides a bridge between the realms of disability studies and sociological research into the Paralympic Movement. Furthermore, it is hoped that individuals with impairments, including disability rights activists and Paralympians, will see the connections between

Paralympic sport and the social perceptions, treatment and interventions experienced by individuals who identify as 'disabled'. The platform this research provides, at the nexus between disability studies and sociology of sport, hopefully provides a site on which knowledge of disability sport, sport and society can be shared and built on.

This research project inevitably possessed some shortcomings. Firstly, only a small number of members, from the vast Paralympic field, drawn from western democracies, were interviewed. Documentary research could have facilitated comparisons of governmental and sporting policy provisions across several countries towards Paralympic sport. However this again would only reflect policy guidelines and not how the Paralympic Movement is perceived and experienced in reality.

Another shortcoming for this research was not all Paralympic sub-fields were accessed. Although individuals from IPC and media sub-fields were not accessed the publications and reports that are emitted by these sub-fields arguably provide an insight into their perceptions of, and desires for, the Paralympic Movement. Nevertheless it is important to strive to access IPC officials and media professionals to gain their personal perspectives on the Paralympic Movement, to uncover whether they agree/disagree with the rhetoric produced by the IPC and media sub-fields about Paralympic sport. The challenges affecting the size and constitution of the sample have already been outlined (chapter 5) and reflect the relative lack of sociological research into Paralympic sport alongside the time and resource limits incurred.

Through this research the Paralympic Movement was analysed, but other realms of disability sport, for example the Special Olympics and Deaflympics, were not. For future research, the Commonwealth Games, which includes some impaired athletes, could provide another useful site for investigating the social perceptions of elite athletes with a disability. This is especially relevant as on occasions disabled athletes have been selected to compete in the same events as able-bodied competitors at the Commonwealth Games (BBC, 2010).

This research provided a specialised and localised insight into a specific elite disability sport movement. The understanding gained from this thesis cannot be extrapolated to provide an insight of the social perceptions of disability and sport as a whole. However, it does provide a significant contribution to understanding the Paralympic Movement and social perceptions of some elite athletes with a disability.

### Summary

This research provides a sociological investigation into a purportedly elite disability sport competition, namely the Paralympic Games. Semi-structured interviews with members of the Paralympic field were critically analysed using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field. Research findings supported the existence of a Paralympic field. The thesis identified and explored the relationships between the core constituents involved in shaping the Paralympic Movement. Some perceived purposes of the Paralympic Games were explored using the dataset. The suitability of bodies with different impairments to be vehicles for an elite sports competition was considered, and potential future developments for the Paralympic Movement were discussed. These research themes critically explore some of the issues facing the development of the Paralympic Movement.

Assertions about which bodies have a legitimate claim to be involved in Paralympic sport, alongside how impaired bodies are used to create an elite disability sport spectacle such as the Paralympic Games, remain contested by members and organisations who influence, through consensus and conflict, the development of the Paralympic field. This research provides a platform, at the nexus between disability studies and sociology of sport, which can be used to critically analyse the social perceptions of supposedly elite athletes with a disability competing within the Paralympic Movement. The thesis also provides a site through which knowledge of disability sport, sport and society can hopefully be shared and built on.

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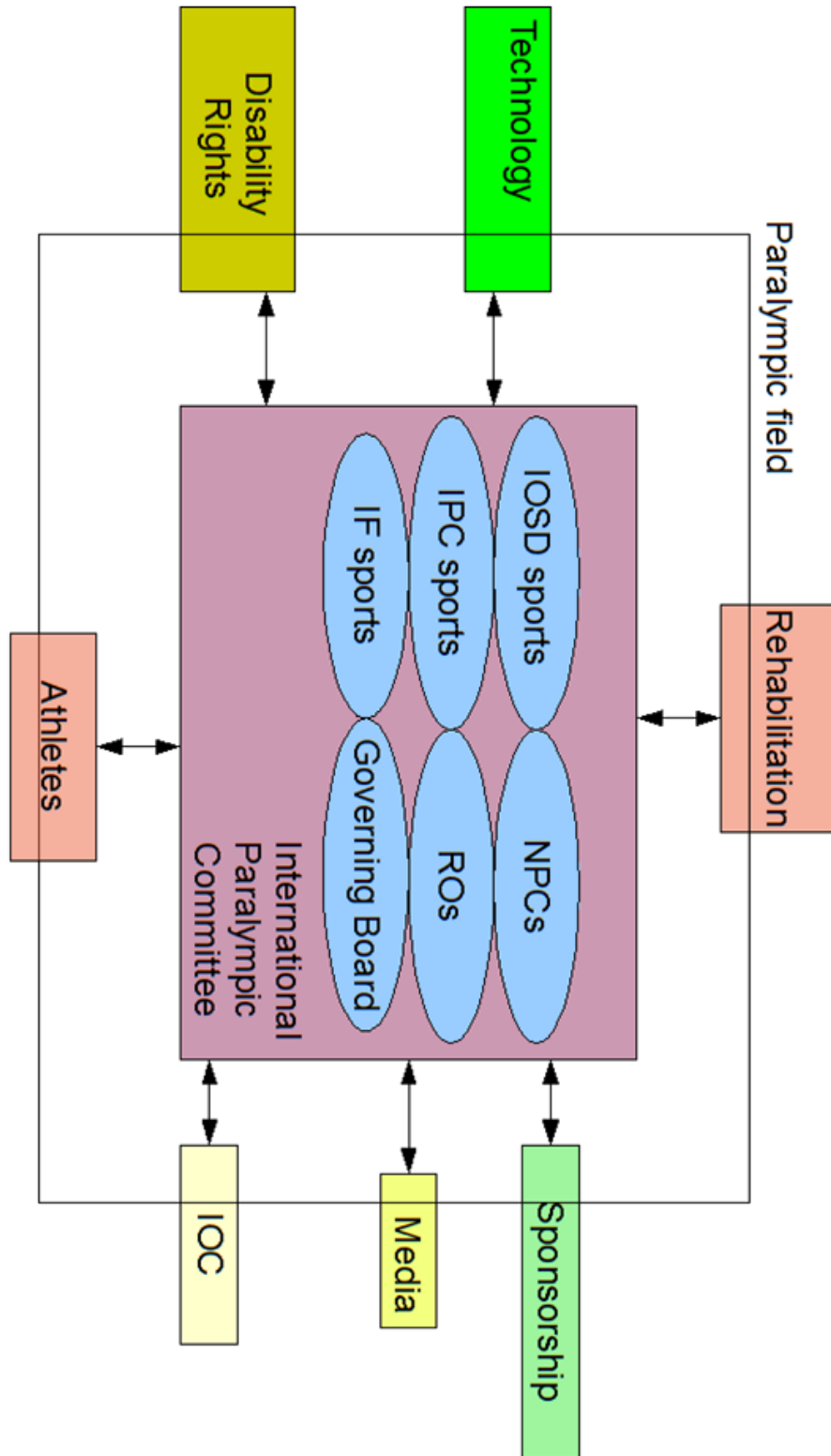
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**Appendix A – The Current Paralympic Field**



**Appendix B – Informed Consent Form**



**Sociological research into  
the development of the Paralympic Movement**

***INFORMED CONSENT FORM***

The purpose of this study has been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further knowledge of the Paralympic movement.

I have had opportunities to ask questions about my participation in this research and will be able to do so after the interview.

Since first being contacted by Mr David Purdue, I understood that I was under no obligation to take part in this research.

I understand my name will not be included in the publication of this research. Instead a pseudonym known only to the research team will be used when referring to my comments.

I agree to comments made in the interview (to be held on DATE) being reproduced, and made available for others to read, within research publications undertaken by the author.

A full verbatim interview transcript will be made available to me should I request it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I have read and understood this consent form.

Your name

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Your signature

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Date

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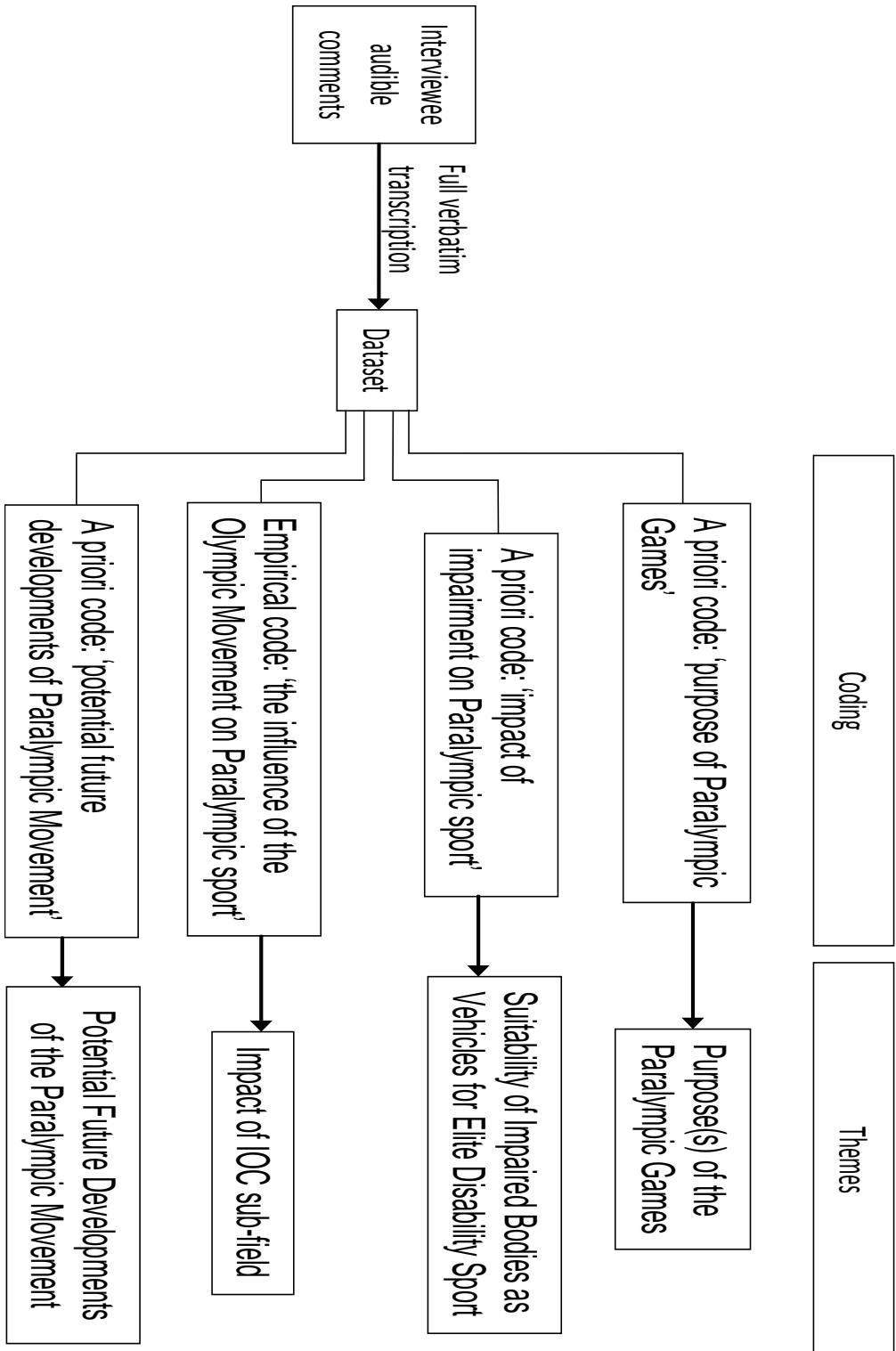
Signature of investigator

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Date

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**Appendix C – Diagram demonstrating how themes were derived from the coded interview data**





### **Appendix D – Interviewee Profiles**

Interviewee Pseudonym	Interviewee Description	Interview format	Duration of interview
Abigail	Former wheelchair basketball player at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games.	Telephone	48mins
Barry	Able-bodied former coach and administrator in Blind sport.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 50mins
Cameron	Able-bodied administrator of wheelchair basketball.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 11mins
Connor	Able-bodied former Paralympic sport administrator.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 32mins
Daniel	Former Paralympic track athlete with cerebral palsy, between the late 1980s up to 2000. He has been a journalist and administrator of Paralympic sport before being a social researcher of disability sport.	Face-to-face	55mins
Dennis	Former administrator in cerebral palsy sport and adapted physical activity practitioner.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 20mins
Donald	Able-bodied social researcher of Paralympic sport actively involved in the administration of Paralympic sport through his work with an NPC.	Telephone	53mins
Edward	Two-time Paralympic 7-side-footballer who has cerebral palsy. Currently a campaigner for human rights within Olympic and Paralympic sport.	Telephone	1 hour & 1min
Graeme	Able-bodied researcher who worked with the British	Telephone	38mins

	Para-cycling team to help improve their performances at 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games		
Jack	Former Paralympic wheelchair tennis player from the early 1990s up to the mid 2000s. Currently a disability sport administrator.	Face-to-face	44mins
Jerry	Current British Wheelchair basketball player and winner of a bronze medal as part of the British Men's Wheelchair basketball team at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games.	Telephone	27mins
Michelle	Individual with cerebral palsy, who competed as a swimmer at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games. She was an administrative assistant at Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games and is currently undertaking social research into Paralympic sport.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 46mins
Nathan	Acquired a spinal cord injury and is currently an academic social researcher investigating disability and disability theory.	Telephone	56mins
Padraig	Former multi-medal winning swimmer at the 1992 Paralympic Games and current disability sport administrator.	Telephone	1 hour & 4mins
Paul	Former gold medal winning wheelchair racer in the late 1980s.	Face-to-face	1 hour & 10mins
Patrick	Single leg amputee administrator of sport for individuals with cerebral	Face-to-face	1 hour & 22mins

	palsy.		
Roger	Able-bodied sports administrator influentially involved in the development of powerchair football.	Telephone	48mins
Sam	Single leg amputee and former bronze medal winning track athlete at the 1992 Paralympic Games.	Telephone	1hour & 3mins
Teresa	Former multi-medal winning Paralympic swimmer, from the late 1980s until early 1990s. She is currently a disability rights activist.	Telephone	1hour & 7mins
Trevor	Able-bodied administrator of Paralympic sport who is actively involved in preparations for London 2012 Paralympic Games.	Telephone	41mins

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to archery except arrows are aimed at a target that has a dartboard layout.

<sup>2</sup> Debates about when the ISMG officially became termed the Paralympic Games are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> 'High performance' may sometimes be viewed as synonymous with elite performance. Howe (2008a:57) articulates the importance of making a distinction between high performance and elite performance.

<sup>4</sup> It is important not to lose sight of the fact that while athletes may specialise heavily (eg. professional soccer players are not also professional rugby players) within athletics and swimming successful multi-event able-bodied athletes remain revered (arguably even more so than single event specialists) as elite performers.

<sup>5</sup> The importance of classification, aside from in a sporting context, is also discussed on a macro level, for example, by Foucault (1977)

<sup>6</sup> Anecdotal evidence of this pressure was apparent in 2001 when a possible reduction in the number of events and competitors allowed to compete at the Paralympic Games was considered by the IPC (see Bailey, 2008:238).

<sup>7</sup> Further insight into issues surrounding disability sport and masculinity can be found at Gershick and Miller (1995); Smith and Sparkes (2002); Sparkes and Smith (2003); Thomas and Smith (2003). Work relating to disability sport and femininity can be located in Guthrie and Castelnovo (2001); Hargreaves (2000).

<sup>8</sup> See Howe's (2008a:106-107) critique of DePauw and Gavron's (2005) use of 'athlete cameos'

<sup>9</sup> Some of the work undertaken by this Commission has already been documented (Bailey, 2008; Brittain, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Note Paralympic demonstration events have subsequently ceased to be included since the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games (Legg et al. ,2009).

<sup>11</sup> The IOC websites account of the 1984 Olympic Games fails to mention the existence of the Paralympic demonstration sports, but ironically mentions a wheelchair user (Archer Neroli Fairhall) competing in an Olympic event. See IOC (2009a)

<sup>12</sup> Details of further IPC-IOC agreements can be found in Bailey (2008) and IPC (2010e)

<sup>13</sup> Note the potential for the Paralympic Movement to have an impact on the social issues faced by disabled people will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that within the media-sport production complex (Maguire, 1999) there is a lucrative place for lifestyle articles about able bodied sportsmen and women. It would be interesting to learn, but is beyond the remit of this research to investigate, what percentage of these sporting lifestyle articles fill media outlets (magazines, newspapers, TV broadcasts) and if there is a dramatic difference in the proportion of lifestyle and 'serious' sports reporting between able bodied and disabled populations.

<sup>15</sup> There is a need to remember to question social developments, especially when such changes are framed as mere evolution not subject to human coercion and influence but merely 'natural' and 'inevitable'

<sup>16</sup> Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field researching and disseminating knowledge on the social experiences of individuals with a disability (See Albrecht et al, 2001; Davis, 1997)

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<sup>17</sup> 'Sport for the disabled' may be considered an inappropriate terminology because it subordinates 'the disabled' as subjects of able-bodied control and/or charity. I do not use the term 'sport for the disabled' in this thesis but appreciate it has potential for effectively describing 'disability sport' and thus should not be disregarded as politically incorrect. See Howe (2008a) in this regard.

<sup>18</sup> Further details on the reasoning behind this name change are available at: [www.scope.org.uk/downloads/publications/scopename\\_change.pdf](http://www.scope.org.uk/downloads/publications/scopename_change.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> For a more in depth history of disability politics see Campbell and Oliver (1996); Shakespeare (2006)

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed genealogical account of the genesis of Bourdieu's theory, which stems from and builds upon other social theorists work, see Laberge and Kay (2002), Jenkins (1992) and Webb et. al. (2001).

<sup>21</sup> Note, related issues of ontology and epistemology of knowledge are discussed later in chapter 5

<sup>22</sup> To aid explanation, and use, of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, at times, throughout this thesis other authors interpretations will be used. In part this reflects an appreciation that Bourdieu's writing style has been adjudged at times to be subject to tautology. It is appreciated that using others authors' interpretations of a sociological theory could be considered problematic and lead to various interpretations of the same theory being put forward. However, it is hoped the use of other authors will in fact help provide a more complete, rather than fragmented or contradictory, account of Bourdieu's sociological concepts. The aforementioned issue of Bourdieu and tautology is discussed later in chapter 4

<sup>23</sup> To label an item as 'tasteful' in everyday life is often a positive description of an item based on personal frames of reference for taste. However in this regard I refer to taste(ful) goods, namely those social artefacts and lifestyles that contain within them, and thus when consumed and undertaken demonstrate, a certain level of taste depending on how they are deciphered by others (Bourdieu, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Note it is important to consider both capital and field in isolation prior to a discussion of how capital can be exchanged and transformed within and across fields. The concept of Field is discussed in isolation later.

<sup>25</sup> Equal prize money for men and women singles champions at Wimbledon was first awarded in 2007 (BBC, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> A larger copy of the 'Paralympic Field' diagram can be viewed in Appendix A

<sup>27</sup> A breakdown of the make-up of the IPC can be viewed at IPC (2010f)

<sup>28</sup> Documentation outlining the use of appropriate language when reporting on individuals with disabilities can be found at IPC (2008c)

<sup>29</sup> Classification systems are a *product* of the relations between members involved in the Paralympic field. Classification does not represent a separate sub-field because it is a tool for organising sporting competitions, in much the same way as the notion of athletes representing their own nations, often within gender-specific athlete groups, is a product of the chosen structure of the Olympic Games, FIFA world cup, etc. However, it is appreciated that, as with all social constructs, classification systems have had an important role within the development of Paralympic sport (see chapter 2)

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<sup>30</sup> A T11 athlete is a track (T) athlete who is totally blind and runs with a guide runner. A SB1 athlete swims breaststroke (SB) and is deemed to have a severe disability. More details of the specific classes for track athletes and swimmers can be found at IPC (2010g) and IPC (2010h) respectively.

<sup>31</sup>The obvious contemporary example of an athlete who has fulfilled this criteria is Natalie du Toit, while Oscar Pistorius represents an athlete who is still, to date, striving to fulfil the criteria to warrant competing in the Olympic Games

<sup>32</sup>A template of the informed consent form can be seen in Appendix B

<sup>33</sup> Securing one interview was the result of a speculative e-mail sent to what the researcher felt was a redundant e-mail address accessed via a dated and obscure document written by the desired interviewee. This e-mail address was however active and provided access to an individual previously unobtainable through 'official' lines of enquiry.

<sup>34</sup>In accordance with ethical research practice it was also considered necessary to include the contact details of a senior member of staff at the university should the need arise for an individual, contacted by myself, to voice concerns to a university representative.

<sup>35</sup> Wheelchair basketball players are assigned a score based on their functional ability ranging from 0.5 for the most severely impaired, up to 4.5 for the least severely impaired.

<sup>36</sup>Some further details about interviewees are enclosed within Appendix D

<sup>37</sup> A diagram of this process is provided in Appendix C.

<sup>38</sup> As referred to briefly in chapter 5

<sup>39</sup>Some exceptions to this rule do apply, for example the able-bodied men's 800metre world record is 1:41.01 (see IAAF, 2010), slower than the Men's T54 800metre world record of 1:32.17 (see IPC 2010i)

<sup>40</sup>I use the term 'body bar' to draw analogies with the term 'colour bar' which symbolises the segregation of individuals because of 'race'.

<sup>41</sup>See Chapter 4 for outline and discussion of these eight sub-fields

<sup>42</sup>There are 3 classes for athletes with visual impairments at the Paralympic Games: T/F11, T/F12, T/F13. T/F11 are track/field athletes with the most severe visual impairments. For more details on the differences between T/F11, T/F12 and T/F13 athletes see IPC (2006)

<sup>43</sup>T42s are track athletes with a single leg amputated above the knee or an impairment equivalent to a single leg above knee amputee (IPC, 2006:21). For more details see IPC (2006)

<sup>44</sup>T51s are a group of track athletes who compete in a wheelchair. These athletes are the most impaired class of wheelchair racers. For more details see IPC (2006)

<sup>45</sup>Interviewees used a variety of terms to describe individuals who possess an intellectual impairment. Terms such as 'learning disabled', 'learning disabilities', 'intellectually disabled', etc. are considered, in this thesis, to represent the same cohort of athletes.

<sup>46</sup>Paralympic swimming consists of 13 functional classes. Swimmers with physical impairments compete in classes 1-10 with class 1 for individuals with the most severe impairments and class 10 occupied by Paralympic swimmers with minimal impairment. Swimmers in classes 11-13 possess visual impairments. (IPC, 2010h)

<sup>47</sup> For example, organisers of the Moscow 1980 Olympics refused to hold a Paralympic Games as they stated Russia did not possess any disabled people. Also, the organisers of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics claimed they could not secure the financial backing necessary to host the Paralympic Games (see Bailey, 2008).

<sup>48</sup> The combination of able-bodied and disabled athletes within the same sports event is also common within some other Paralympic sports. For example, in athletic track events a guide runner is provided to assist athletes who are blind or have a severe visual impairment

<sup>49</sup> Runyan became the first legally blind person and Paralympian to compete in the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. She finished eighth in the 1500-metres, the highest finish by an American woman in that event. In 2002, Marla finished as the top American, with the second-fastest debut time by a woman, in the New York City Marathon (Bussels, 2006). For more information see Bussels (2006).

<sup>50</sup> Inevitably it is beyond the capabilities of this research at present to prove or disprove this assertion, but this topic does represent an avenue for further research

<sup>51</sup> Although individuals belonging to the media sub-field were not interviewed, the dominance of media within western societies meant interviewees had a wealth of experiences involving the media. Furthermore, it is arguably how media products are interpreted that is most significant, and all interviewees could be considered as consumers of media products, thereby making their insights into the media highly relevant.