

Making Paralympic Champions? Socio-Economic Determinants of Paralympic Participation & Success.

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Image description: Young Anjali black and white photo in an older style "V" shaped racing wheelchair on a track with grass in the background. She is wearing a helmet with hand visible wearing a glove pushing on the rim and focused on the end of the race.

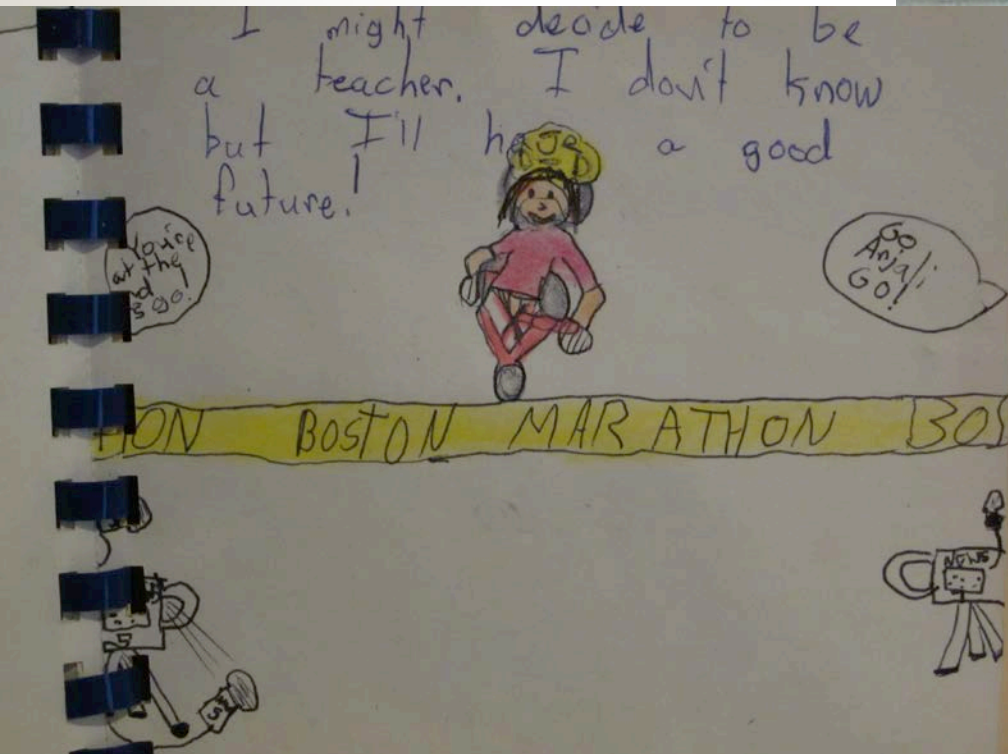


Image description: Children's drawing of person in pink racing wheelchair wearing yellow helmet at finish line of Boston Marathon. Speech bubbles from side say "Go Anjali Go" and Drawings of video cameras capturing the moment.

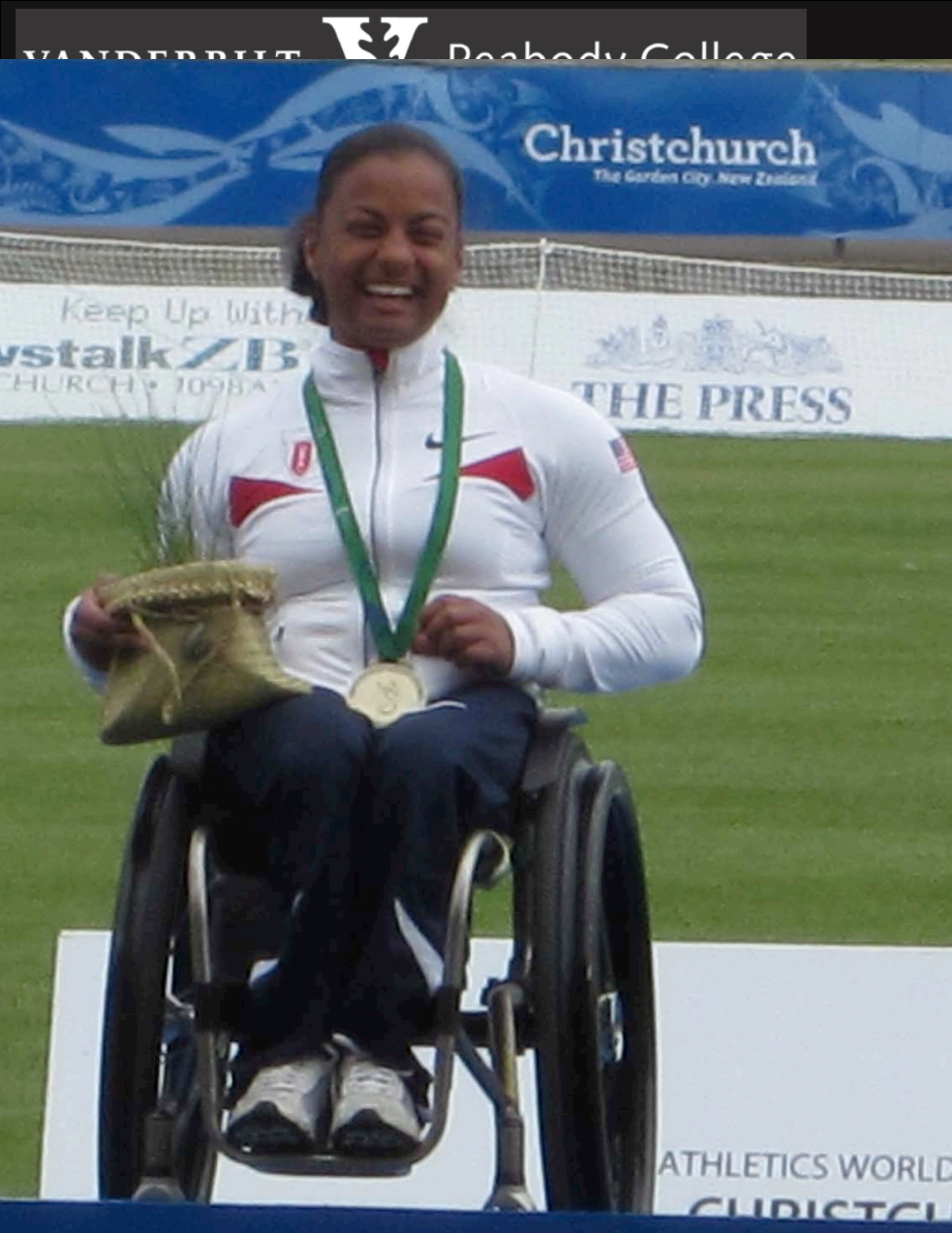


Image description: Anjali sitting in day chair on podium with gold medal with green ribbon around neck and holding a plant in a basket with a big smile. In the background signs for the IPC Athletics World Championships and Christchurch and other sponsors can be seen.



Image description: Finish line photo finish of Anjali on a track in her red racing wheelchair wearing USA jersey and red sunglasses with one arm raised in air celebrating and one hand still on push rim with black gloves on.

Past & Current Research

Sport & Disability Identity Development

(Forber-Pratt, Scott, Driscoll, 2013; Forber-Pratt, 2015)

- According to the United Nations, it is estimated that 10% of the world's population has some type of disability
- 80% of them live in developing countries
- Disability sport is beneficial to the health, psychosocial well-being, and identity of people (Anderson, 2009)



Research Questions

- What can we learn about grassroots Paralympic Sport Development?
- What are the affects of sport programs for persons with disabilities on health, well-being and quality of life?
- How has the implementation of sport programs for persons with disabilities affected the perceptions of disability by the community in these nations?

Methods
















Case Study Design (Stake, 1995)

- I. Observations
- II. Fieldwork
- III. Semi-Structured Interviews
- IV. Archival Media



Participants

- 15 interviews
 - athletes with disabilities (n=8)
 - coaches (including one parent-coach) (n=2)
 - program coordinators (n=4)
 - parents (n=1)
- The types of disabilities represented included:
 - paralysis from birth, polio, amputation, and paralysis due to an accident

Pseudonym	Country	Role
Jane		Athlete/Paralympian
Tano		Athlete/Paralympian
Antobam		Athlete/Paralympian
Abeeku		Athlete
Amir		Athlete
Amy		Coach
Linda		Parent
John		Program Coord.
Kip		Coach/Parent
Coujoe		Athlete
Tina		Program Coord.
Mensah		Athlete/Paralympian
Tim		Program Admin.
Jamie		Program Coord.
Sophia		Athlete

Bermuda

- The number of persons with disabilities from the 2000 Census in Bermuda was: 2,832
 - This accounts for ~4.56% of the population
- Age Distribution (as of 2000)
 - 8% were between ages of 0-15
 - 55% were between 16-64
 - 37% were 65 or older
- Leading occupational groups for PWD were production, transport, service and clerical
- In 2005 a National Advisory Council on Disabilities was established with goal of adopting laws/policies to protect PWD, no action on this to date
- Paralympic Games representation 2000, 2004, 2008 & 2012



Summary of the Work

- I have been involved with Bermuda and sport development for PWD since 2009
- Total of four trips to Bermuda, plus numerous meetings in other locations around the world and on-going consulting
- Involved with teaching sport clinics, coaches education, supporting development of five Paralympic sports

GHANA

- According to the World Health Organization ~2.5 million people with disabilities in Ghana
 - 70% are illiterate due to lack of educational access
- In 2010, the Ghanaian National Council on Persons with Disabilities ran a disability awareness campaign to begin to counter deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes
 - 80-90% of working age people with disabilities are unemployed.
- Paralympic Games representation 2004 & 2008, 2012 (on wildcard)



Summary of the Work

- Members of research team been involved with Ghana and sport development for PWD since 2001
- Included both work on the ground in Ghana and bringing athletes/coaches to US for education and training purposes
- Involved with teaching wheelchair track clinics, meeting with high level officials, making recommendations to existing disability organizations and serving as on-going consultants

RESULTS*

- Benefits to One's Perception of Self
 - *Internalized identity changes*
 - *Outward expressions of abilities*
- Benefits to Other's Perceptions of Disability
 - *Sport-specific changes in perceptions of athletes with disabilities*
 - *Recognition of broader non-athletic capabilities*
- Sense of Civic Responsibility
 - *Desire to give back to own community*
 - *Challenges of the spotlight*
 - *Becoming a role model for others*

Examples from ATHLETES

- “You know, it [sport] **gave me a sense of identity** and really brought out who I am.” (*Jane, Bermudian Paralympic Athlete, Track & Field*)
- “**I am confident now**. I want to change people perceptions about people with physical disabilities. The talent I have is one of the tools that I have can do that.” (*Coujoe, Ghanaian Paralympic Athlete, Cycling*)
- “**Now my family talks to me**. . . We’ve passed through obstacles and made it. I have changed; I am stronger. Through this, we are changing the perceptions of persons with disabilities in Ghana.” (*Abeeku, Ghanaian Paralympic Athlete, Wheelchair Racing*)

Examples from ATHLETES

- “Because of the way they treated me, I never even liked to go close to where people are. But **sports has really changed my life**, in the sense that I did not know how to go in public or speak in public before. ”
(Mensah, Ghanaian Paralympic Aspirant, Track & Field)
- “My voice and the other athletes, when we speak on radio and on TV our voices are heard. **We are the voice for the voiceless**. Aside, people are now valuing us people are now giving us that respect, pointing their hands saying that this guy is a star, you are a star, keep it up. ” *(Coujoe, Ghanaian Paralympic Athlete, Cycling)*

ZAMBIA

- According to the World Health Organization ~2 million people with disabilities in Zambia (~15% of population)
 - Many in rural areas
- Challenges with employment rate and access to education
 - Of those working, 80% are employed in agriculture
- Paralympic Games representation in 1996 & 2000, 2008 (all track & field)



Summary of the Work

- Went to Zambia as part of U.S. State Department Sport Envoys Program in April 2017
- Programming in conjunction with Zambian Paralympic Committee, Special Olympics Zambia and the Zambian U.S. Embassy
- Two-day clinics in both Ndola and Lusaka (capital)
- Involved with teaching practical wheelchair track and running clinics, workshops and content for coaches, athletes and teachers, meeting with high level officials, making recommendations to existing disability organizations and serving as on-going consultants



Examples from ATHLETES

- “I may have a **bright future, a brighter future, because of sport.**” (*Sophia, Zambian Paralympic Aspirant, Track & Field*)
- [When did you start wheelchair racing?] “When I was at school. Yes...When I was in grade five...There was a teacher who was in charge of the sports who was, let me say to be specific, with wheelchair racing...And among those, I was identified. **I grew up with it until I graduated...**I completed my grade twelve. Yes. I used to participate and to compete with other schools like right here in Zambia.. So among those schools, I used to beat them, you see...And then the time I was in grade 10, I was picked. Yes. I was picked to go and attend the intercom relay in Lusaka. ... **But then, after I completed school, I became a bit down** due to lack of sponsorship.” (*Sophia, Zambian Paralympic Aspirant, Track & Field*)

Considerations

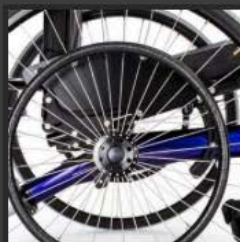
- What existing infrastructure or knowledge exists in the country?
 - *What can be leveraged?*
- What sport(s) are of the most interest? To athletes? To coaches? To administrators? To government? To organizations?
- What are the costs involved with the sport(s) of interest?



Invacare Top End Preliminator Racing Wheelchair



CLICK TO ENLARGE



Designed with active youth in mind, this racing wheelchair features an adjustable back angle, foot plate, and seat depth to allow for growth and use by multiple users. Based off of one measurement, this racing wheelchair is easy for individuals to order and perfect for schools, clubs and programs.

The Invacare Top End Preliminator Racing Wheelchair is for active youth who want to participate in track racing with their family and friends. This sports chair is designed to help a child or young adult to begin their journey into an active lifestyle.

Available in one of five set size configurations which makes ordering a breeze, select either a 10", 12", 14", 16" or 18" or you select your specific requirements with our customized Preliminator.

For ordering help, please refer to the FAQs which will lead you to our great help desk/ The Help Desk has answers to most questions in one handy location and can guide you through the measurement process plus help you figure out the best options. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to click the "[How to Buy](#)" tab. We would love to help you.

Benefits

- Lower cost (~\$1000-\$1500)
- Adjustable (foot plate, back angle, seat depth)
- Low maintenance
- Quick-release wheels

STRENGTHS

- history of commitment to disability sport
- multiple disability-related agencies
- high numbers of PWD
- success from 2010 World Cup

WEAKNESSES

- high turnover with leadership in agencies and government posts
- poverty level of PWD is high
- lack of \$ support
- low levels of education
- poor management of healthcare

SWOT ANALYSIS: Ghana

OPPORTUNITIES

- organizations expressing interest in collaboration
- commitment from Right to Dream to host 4 Paralympic hopeful athletes through London and continued active club

THREATS

- deeply rooted religious stigmas
- lack of policies and laws for PWD
- difficult to gain commitment even from high level officials
- culture of bartering
- fear of change

STRENGTHS

- high level of community support
 - single disability-related org committed to sport development
 - has \$ to support
 - past Paralympic success in equestrian
- Success at worlds

WEAKNESSES

- single disability agency responsible for all disabilities and all things disability-related
 - island-nation
 - information is primary lacking resource
- low numbers of PWD

SWOT ANALYSIS: Bermuda

OPPORTUNITIES

- athletes come from committed and driven families
- strong relationship with Canada

THREATS

- Lack of policies and laws for PWD
 - NPC struggles to understand differences between policies for different sports
 - Fear of unknown

STRENGTHS

- Support from US Embassy
- Collaboration with Special Olympics and National Paralympic Committee
- high numbers and interest of PWD
- Access to youth Olympic center
- Wheelchair basketball team

WEAKNESSES

- Leadership turnover at NPC
- poverty level of PWD is high
 - lack of \$ support
- Access to equipment
- poor management of healthcare

SWOT ANALYSIS: Zambia

OPPORTUNITIES

- Embassy and SO and NPC interested in collaborating on future grants
- Minister of Youth, Sport & Child Development wants to grow area of disability sport

THREATS

- lack of enforcement of policies and laws for PWD
- difficult to navigate logistics
- fear of change

CONCLUSIONS

- Participation in sport paves way for athletes with disabilities to become contributing members of society and leaders.
- These individuals use sport as a vehicle to change perceptions and stereotypes about disability.
- Athletes with disabilities from developing nations have a deep devotion to a greater cause and take actions to be civically engaged citizens.
- The disability sport movement is an undervalued asset particularly to countries striving for equality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- Mainstream coaches from developing nations can learn from including individuals with disabilities in sport and it can be a win-win situation by drawing positive attention and changing stereotypes.
- Sport professionals in developing nations play a key role in setting the tone for inclusion and social change.

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Many other countries in the world would like to see how this holds up
- Does this parallel other marginalized groups (i.e., women in sport) in developing nations?
- How does participation in community-based or school-based sport contribute to identity development?

Contact Info

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