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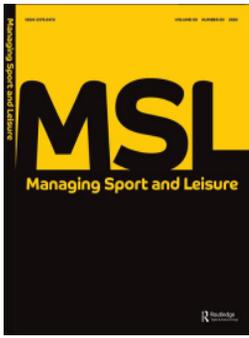
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Bourdieu's practice theory as a multilevel framework for exploring change in disability sport: a case study of disability cricket

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ABSTRACT

Research question: This paper takes a multilevel perspective by combining meso and micro levels of analysis to examine change within a field of disability sport. What is the impact of policy shifts on the power relations between organizations in a field of disability sport? How does change prompt action at the micro-level of disability sport management?

Research methods: A longitudinal, ethnography of organizations involved in managing disability cricket is conducted during the inaugural implementation of Sport England's Whole Sport Plans. Semi-structured interviews with 17 managers and participant observations in the form of field notes were the main tools of data collection.

Results and findings: While the appearance of structural management relations within the field did not appear to change, the underlying power dynamics did. Shifting power relations at the meso-level and the availability of new economic capital to reinforce this power shift, created a series of implications for agents operating at the micro-level, and on the lived experience of disability sport managers.

Implications: Much of the resistance to change that occurred could have been avoided by better communication between agents. Greater effort should be made by policymakers to understand the experiences of those who work to develop sport.

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Introduction

Multi-level analysis allows researchers to address the complexity of behavior and relations that comprise organizational systems (Cunningham, 2010; Dixon & Cunningham, 2006; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). Research situated at either a macro, meso, or micro level of analysis cannot alone be as effective in conceptualizing the influence of shifts occurring at one level upon another. By adopting a multi-level perspective of change in disability

sport, this study offers a richer understanding of how shifts at the field-level activate meso-level power relations that then spur micro-level actions. As such, the aim of this paper is to draw on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu to explore the social milieu of disability sport. Specifically, elements of Bourdieu's practice theory are used to provide a multi-level analysis of the impact of increasing bureaucratization and professionalization of sport on disability sports management. Bourdieu's practice theory offers value as it has the tools to

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conceptualize the wider forces bringing change, the organizations undergoing change and the social practices of practitioners experiencing this change. This study will show that while the appearance of structural management relations within the field do not appear to change, the underlying power dynamics do. As a result, it reveals how organizations accumulate and/or lose capital when negotiating field positions and the impact of this has on workers' social practices. This analysis will, in part address calls for theory to explore the interaction of multilevel mechanisms within the social institutions of sport (Cunningham, 2010) specifically demonstrating how Bourdieu's practice theory is both insightful and practical in sport management.

To this end, I pose two research questions; (1) What is the impact of policy shifts on the power relations between organizations in a field of disability sport? (2) How does change prompt action at the micro-level of disability sport management?

Disability sport management

Few studies have explicitly used multi-level perspectives to empirically examine how the increasing bureaucratization and professionalization of sport has impacted disability sport and its management. This is unsurprising since a series of critiques exposed the relative absence/invisibility of disability in the sport management literature (Misener & Darcy, 2014; Shapiro & Pitts, 2014). Nevertheless, research into the management of disability sport has increased somewhat in the past decade. To map this increase, a brief review of recent studies establishes the need for a multi-level perspective to be adopted.

Disability sport research at the macro level – external to the organization (Ibsen et al., 2019) has included frameworks such as policy analyzes (Paramio-Salcines et al., 2018; Patatas et al., 2018; Thomas & Guett, 2014) and human rights models (Prieto & Paramio-Salcines, 2018) in order to explore the practices

of multi-national organizations on disability sport (Albrecht et al., 2019; Gutt, 2014). The policy of mainstreaming is widespread amongst Global North nations. This process involves the integration of disability sports organization into non-disabled (or mainstream) sports organizations. However, Thomas and Guett (2014) revealed that mainstreaming is beset with two major flaws. First, practitioners seem reluctant to define what mainstreaming actually means. This lack of an acceptable or agreed definition from policy-makers leads to inconsistencies in styles and approaches, leading each country to offer different practices. Second, when it does occur, it appears to be performed reluctantly. There are numerous cases where the non-disabled sport does not share equal power or equal access to services for disabled athletes. These flaws contribute to a “fragmented, complex and cumbersome” disability sport system (p. 404).

At the meso (field and organizational) level studies have conceptualized and explored organizational practices through various lenses. These include ableism (Brittain et al., 2020; Hammond & Jeanes, 2018), theories of resource dependency (Brown & Pappous, 2018; Walker & Hayton, 2017), organizational capacity (Kitchin et al., 2019; Kitchin & Crossin, 2018; Maleske & Sant, 2020; Wicker & Breuer, 2014), policy implementation (Hammond et al., 2019; Jeanes et al., 2018; Jeanes et al., 2019; Kitchin & Howe, 2014; Patatas et al., 2020; Thomas & Smith, 2009), culture, acculturation and integration (Howe, 2007; Hums et al., 2003; Kitchin et al., 2020; Kitchin & Crossin, 2018; Quinn et al., 2020; Sørensen & Kahrs, 2006). Brown and Pappous (2018) revealed that in the context of British austerity (2010–2020), National Disability Sports Organizations increased their sustainability by forming partnerships and generating knowledge resources – such as helping National Sports Organizations to target talented individuals with disabilities for performance programs. Similarly, research investigating organizational capacity in disability sport highlighted that

when financial resources are supported by networking capacity increases in disability sport participation are possible (Kitchin et al., 2019; Kitchin & Crossin, 2018).

Recent investigations have examined the perspectives of those managing sport and how they have implemented specific projects to increase the participation of disabled people (Cottingham et al., 2013a; Cunningham & Warner, 2019; Jeanes et al., 2018; Pate et al., 2020; Storr et al., 2021). Importantly at this micro-level, researchers have been more successful at increasing the voices and experiences of disabled people. Disabled people's interaction with multi-level barriers that prevent social inclusion is a common theme, whether in participation (Darcy et al., 2017; Darcy & Dowse, 2013; Ives et al., 2021; Sotiriadou & Wicker, 2014), spectatorship (Brown, 2020; García et al., 2017; Paramio-Salcines et al., 2018; Penfold & Kitchin, 2020), or employment in sport (Dickson et al., 2017; Kappelides & Spoor, 2019; Wright & Cunningham, 2017). Kappelides and Spoor (2019) examined the experiences of disabled people who volunteered in sport. They found commonalities between the barriers that restricted their participation in playing sport repeated into the employment space. This is because many of these barriers are manifest from the attitudes and perspectives of those who manage sport (Jeanes et al., 2018; Storr et al., 2021). Programs to educate sport's stakeholders are vital for impacting disability sport participation (Cottingham et al., 2013; Cunningham & Warner, 2019; Pate et al., 2020). Despite this burgeoning literature, more work is needed to explore how interlevel relations react when change occurs in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities available to disability sport. I now explore Bourdieu's practice theory and how this is used in this study to form the multi-level model.

Theoretical framework

Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory attempts to explore the relationship between an agent

(individuals and organizations), their practice and the social spaces in which they operate, including that of sport management (Kitchin & Howe, 2013). For example, practice theory examines the relationship between the objective structures of an industry and the subjective agents that comprise that industry, yet all within the context of the wider social environment that an industry exists within. That Bourdieu's practice theory provides multiple concepts that operate at various levels of analysis make it a suitable framework. In this paper I primarily the core concepts such as field, capital, habitus, doxa and hysteresis. Each is briefly introduced now.

In this framework, the term field is a contested space of social practices that contains a hierarchical system of agents (individuals and organizations) who jockey for social positions. The field of disability cricket examined here represents but one field of disability cricket and collectively these are fields of grassroots sport development (see Purdue & Howe, 2015 for an example of a field of elite disability sport development) that consist of many agents. In any field, agents compete to position themselves in that social space to secure resources (Bourdieu, 1998). As such, an agent's position in this field is determined by the possession of these resources, known as economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals. Different positions within the social space reveal a "class of positions [that have] a certain class of habitus" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 5). The social conditioning of dispositions produces a "unity of style" in that the social practices they enact are similar (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 8), which symbolically differentiates one group of agents from another. These dispositions form the habitus.

Habitus is a "generative and unifying principle" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 8) that embodies the characteristics of a field position into a certain lifestyle. It includes not only social practices of action, that is, the manner in which we perform our roles, but also a series of classificatory schemes that determine our perceptions,

or in other words, it influences the way in which we make sense of the world. Bourdieu's framework emphasizes distinction, mainly that "to exist within the social space, to occupy a position ... is to be different" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 9). This specificity of the habitus to the field ensures that this distinction is recognized by others within the field.

Governing the perception of acceptable means-and-ends relationships in each field is the field's own orthodoxy. As an individual's habitus is structured by the field, they believe that this orthodoxy is appropriate and sensible and naturally the basis for all taken-for-granted assumptions about how the field operates. This orthodoxy is termed *doxa*. *Doxa* can differentiate one field from another and requires an agent's participation in the field in order to understand it (Bourdieu, 1998). Agents, therefore, conform to a field's *doxa*. As Atkinson (2015) states *doxa*, field, habitus and capital are relational:

There are shared elements of experience and knowledge deriving from membership of [the field, that influences] knowledge of what is or could be done to attain recognition, [to determine] who is who, where to go ... *Doxa* ... is evidently layered within habitus. (p. 3)

Field level change can occur because of numerous phenomena. Changes in the composition of agents within a field, that is, new entrants staking positions, shifts in how certain capital is valued, and movement in the field's *doxa* which all can threaten the structuring of the habitus. For example, Wright (2009) took a generative reading of Bourdieu's fields as nested layers in order to explain a change in English County Cricket. In her case study, societal shifts in the macro-environment forced the sports' administrators to improve the second-class status of the working-class professionals by removing a series of procedures (such as separate change rooms for amateurs and professionals) that reinforced Victorian-era class divisions within the sport. These decisions gave greater credence to an emerging

professional habitus that we now associated with modern cricketers. As such, the social practice of managing the sport was altered by these environmental changes. In changing situations like these, *doxic* uncertainty is created and hysteresis can occur.

Hysteresis occurs in situations describe above when fields change. This creates a crisis for an agent wedded to the way things were (Kerr & Robinson, 2009; McDonough & Polzer, 2012). McDonough and Polzer (2012) examined how public sector workers were impacted by continual change, thus leading to hysteresis. In their case, resistance to and frustration with continual change directives from local politicians and senior managers, created over time an embodied response in staff health and well-being. However, they also noted that periods of hysteresis provided opportunities for "subversive symbolic action aimed at legitimating and ratifying" discontent (McDonough & Polzer, 2012, p. 374). As such, field-level change creates relational impacts because each aspect of the field is linked. This interlinking of concepts that comprise this social theory is therefore suited for multi-level analysis. Bourdieu's framework provides concepts that link the social (meso) and the personal (micro) in disability sport.

Context

In this study, this field of disability cricket is located within multiple layers of fields. In some cases, the dynamics of a given field influence another field's *doxa*. An example of this, in this case, is the increasing professionalization and accountability of the public sector field which has an impact upon the governance of sport (Grix, 2009). I argue that the bureaucratic field (a macro field with the *doxa* of professionalization and managerialism) has influenced the fields like sport development, disability sport and as explored through this case, a field of disability cricket.

As introduced above, each field, from macro to the meso has specific sets of valued capital and each is governed by a distinct doxa. The boundaries between these fields are fluid and each field shares a relationship with another (Purdue & Howe, 2015). Outlining how this field of disability cricket is perceived is an important point that situates our analysis as it highlights the specificity of the unit of analysis. Bourdieu (2005) stated that a field is “the firms, defined by the volume and structure of the field-specific capital they possess, that determine the structure of the field that determines them,” (p. 193). The following details outline and situate this field of disability cricket.

After initially showing interest for the use of “sport-for-good (stressing external benefits to society)” (Collins, 2010, p. 367) the English (Westminster) government published the *Playing to Win (2008)* strategy that prioritized “sport for sport’s sake (stressing intrinsic benefits to sport)” (Collins, 2010, p. 367). National sport strategies were created by Sport England and each NSO. These strategies outlined their shared priorities for each sport – these strategies were named Whole Sport Plans (WSP) (for fuller discussion of WSPs see Thompson et al., 2021).

Within the sport of cricket, the NSO (The England and Wales Cricket Board, hereafter the ECB) provides funding for cricket development. In the implementation of the WSP for cricket in 2009–2013 the ECB agreed that women and girls and disabled people would receive priority. Provincial cricket organizations [known as the Country Cricket Clubs (County CCs)] deliver the ECB’s development objectives in England and Wales. This study is situated within a field of disability cricket in the region of London, of which 5 County CCs share this responsibility. Greater London is home to over 8 million people. Comprising a meso field of sport development in this region are 32 London Boroughs (administrative regions) who work in conjunction with Active (County Sport) Partnerships, NSOs, schools,

independent private and charitable sport providers and voluntary local clubs. Disability sport, a sub-field of sport development had a dedicated agent (Interactive) that during the period of this study worked with all of the above stakeholders to champion disability sport.

In conjunction with Interactive, these County CCs partnered with other smaller sport development organizations to deliver cricket to disabled people. One of these agents was Big City Sports (BCS). BCS was a non-profit sport development agency that had been delivering disability cricket since the 1980s. The relations between these organizations established field boundaries are based on shared access to funding sources (economic capital) and a commitment to cricket development (cultural capital).

As such, this study spans the implementation of the first WSP while focusing on the implementation of a disability cricket development program that provided the opportunity for all 5 County CCs to achieve their commitments towards the WSP targets set by the ECB. The longitudinal focus permits an exploration of how the logic of the bureaucratic field has influenced the doxa of a field disability cricket.

Methodology

Gathering data on field-wide change is a problematic task that starts with selecting a unit of analysis (Dixon & Cunningham, 2006). In this study, the unit of analysis was a program of cricket for disabled youth that was delivered by multiple partners. In attempting to design a methodology it was appropriate to examine not only the management of the program but the relations that existed within and between the organizations involved in its funding and delivery. Ethnography is well suited to studying the dynamics of change at both organizational and individual levels (Fine et al., 2009; Kitchin et al., 2020). This ethnography of field-level change was then able

to focus attention on the relations between agents. The following is a description of my engagement within the field that adheres to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2019) three steps for managing fieldwork.

Managing field relations

My access to the field was via a gatekeeper, the program manager of BCS who also designed the field wide program. He was the key point of contact who provided access then to the organization's partners. Without this access, some of the multi-level data would have been unobtainable. Second, I set about managing field relations by developing relationships within and between organizations by talking to everyone I could and getting involved in any way possible. This involvement included carrying kit, setting up program sessions, scoring, umpiring, minute-taking at meetings – any task that would allow me a conversation with anyone involved in the program (Crabbe, 2007). Three steps were taken to access insider accounts: I chose my data collection tools, I employed a sampling strategy, and I then determined the steps for data analysis. Each of these steps is detailed below.

Participant observation was one of my primary data collection tools. An active member approach was taken to provide "a more central position" in BCS (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 50). The active-member approach is a variant of participant observation which has been shown to be useful in community sport management settings (Misener & Doherty, 2009). From this position, it was easier to implement a variety of other data collection tools such as semi-structured, informal interviews and document analysis. Although this extensive data set was difficult to manage, it provided the ability to triangulate phenomena to improve the robustness of this ethnographic account (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Patton, 2014).

Another concern when practicing ethnography is managing the sampling process (Aull-Davies, 2012). Sampling was conducted through a purposive criterion approach. Selection criteria that would ensure experts were chosen who had a target-setting or reporting relationship across the field. Relationships were formed with many development managers and staff in the NSO, County CCS, local clubs, other charities etc. During the fieldwork, the recruitment of interviewees was determined by a series of inclusion criteria; involvement in the management and/or delivery of disability cricket programs; knowledge of managing and/or processing reporting data; manages formal inter-organizational relationships within the field. The only exclusion criteria implemented was for the interviewee to have at least 3 years' experience prior to the start of the WSP to ensure they had experienced during the changes. A full list of the 17 interviewees' roles and organizations are outlined in Table 1.

Data analysis

A major challenge in this ethnography was managing the volume of data. To assist in the

Table 1. Interviewees' role and organization.

Role(s)	Organisation
Grants Liaison	Sport England
Disability Cricket Officer (v)	England and Wales Cricket Board
Development Manager	The Cricket Foundation
Sport Development Manager	North County Cricket Board
Sport Development Officer	North County Cricket Board
Sport Development Manager	West County Cricket Board
Sport Development Manager	East County Cricket Board
Sport Development Manager	South County Cricket Board
Sport Development Officer	South County Cricket Board
Sport Development Manager	South-East County Cricket Board
Chief Executive Officer	Big City Sports
Programme Manager	Big City Sports
Senior Development Manager	Big City Sports
Sport Development Officer	Big City Sports
Sport Development Officer	Big City Sports
Club Development Officer (v)	Regional Cricket Charity 1
Club Development Officer (v)	Regional Cricket Charity 2

Note: (v) indicates voluntary position.

Source: Author.

manual process of interpretivist data analysis, Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) three-step approach guided a thematic analysis. As the data collection progressed, codes were actively drawn from the data to provide signposts for a more thorough analysis once fieldwork was completed. Familiarization with the transcripts and field notes was time consuming but assisted this process. Having revealed the relationships between the data, a second step established subcategories to examine the complexities of change. Naturally, there was a certain level of overlap between these steps that provided a more comprehensive understanding of the field's social practices. Concept maps were created, to assist data display and visually link themes and codes (Miles et al., 2013). The third step involved the creation of axial codes. In this process, the dimensions of a selected topic were identified and its consequences and relationship to other phenomena were drawn out, resulting in the creation of nodes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Saldaña, 2015).

Managing quality

In order to address Hammersley and Atkinson's (2019) concerns about trust in this process of ethnographic research, some quality checks were carried out. Following Charmaz's (2006) approach it is right to pick and choose these steps rather than adhere to strict interpretation that all steps are required. Despite receiving criticism over their worth (Smith & McGannon, 2018), member checks were performed for two reasons. First member checks were aimed at facilitating further discussion. While this was offered it was limited in uptake. Second, I offered member checks as a courtesy for those who had given their time, so they could see their words and responses. Criticisms made of qualitative research include the ideas that it lacks generalizability. However, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that the

continued examination of phenomena via a cumulative case by case basis allows us to reveal systems of power and inequality and provides comparative benefits. Indeed, I argue that this study meets the expectations of naturalistic generalization as outlined by Smith (2018). Lessons from this situation can be seen in the content of other cases, not necessarily of disability sport but of wider approaches to sport management. Some related work that shares similarities with the findings from this paper includes that of Gowthorp et al.'s (2016) and their exploration of power relations within the organizational field of Australian Rules Football. In their case, a new entrant into this elite, professional sports field was able to leverage their legitimate (legal) authority to withstand and overcome pressure from an incumbent organization that possessed high stocks of symbolic (status) capital. Misunderstandings about the shift in power relations from the incumbent led them to experience economic and reputational losses. These assumptions, misunderstandings and poor communication practices characterize the difficulties faced by agents in this non – elite, non-professional sports field.

In performing this qualitative study processes were used to focus the author on the process of the research and their involvement in the field. A reflexive, continual and ongoing process influenced each stage of the research design, from the creation of research questions, the critique of suitable methods, to the methods of analysis. Discussions with colleagues and academic peers over the course of this research project and the maintenance of a research diary, from its inception to the analysis of the fieldwork this has allowed me to share ideas and refine thoughts with others that benefitted this analysis. The claimed authenticity of the above findings stems from my longitudinal involvement and relationships with members of the field, across multiple organizations, over an extended time period.

Findings

By focusing on how social practices were created and maintained by agents (individuals and organizations) across multi-levels of analysis, these findings below highlight how the reconfiguration of the power relations and the primacy of economic capital have implications for those operating at the micro level of disability sport management.

Accountable sporting fields

In 2002, the “Game Plan report” (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002) criticized Sport England for its lack of direction in the funding and an over-involvement in the delivery of sport development. Prior to the implementation of WSP, disability cricket development was mainly funded by Sport England, with funds allocated through the County CCs or directly to cricket clubs and charities. Most of the organizations in this study are registered charities with the (England and Wales) Charity Commission. For years, a perception existed amongst the sport development managers at the County CCs, that it was either Sport England’s or one of the National Cricket Charities responsibility to develop grassroots cricket, their remit was to focus on the development of performance cricket (Interview: SDM South-East CC).

However, with the launch of WSP in 2009, the first major change occurred in social practice of funding cricket development. All requests from County CCs, cricket clubs and cricket charities had to be approved by the ECB through the newly imposed “Single Investment Scheme”. This led to some reflections.

I suppose this plan is probably going to force the County CCs to actually grow and look at themselves and say if our sport’s going to grow, we’re the ones who’ve got to lead it rather than Sport England all the time. (Interview: SDM, West County CC)

Table 2 highlights the income levels throughout the 2009–2013 period covering the implementation of the WSP. This program did not lead all organizations to increase their revenue over the period, but a 75% increase was seen in the amount of funding across this field. As disability cricket was included in the specifics of the WSP it can be determined that funding opportunities for disability cricket also increased.

The WSP not only changed the funding system but increased accountability through target setting that was contractually obliged. These targets aimed to increase participation in disability cricket. Withing cricket, it gave the ECB complete control over what disability cricket targets were set and how determining how quality would be achieved. As a result,

Table 2. Charitable income throughout the WSP period.

Agents	Income 2008 £000	Income 2013 £000	% Change
Sport England	–	–	–
England and Wales Cricket Board ^a	14,500	34,500	137.93
The Cricket Foundation	6,000	5200	–13.33
The Lord’s Taverners	5,300	6300	18.87
North County Cricket Board	1,100	800	–27.27
Big City Sports	320	980	206.25
Regional Cricket Charity 1	200	230	15
Regional Cricket Charity 2	180	190	5.56
South-East County Cricket Board	85	75	–11.76
South County Cricket Board	28	95	239.29
West County Cricket Board	–	–	–
East County Cricket Board	–	–	–

Source: Charity Commission (England and Wales) figures approximated to protect anonymity.

^aFunds allocated to the development department of the NSO.

these contracts altered the internal and external relationships of the County CC development managers.

Some counties do outstanding work in disability cricket, but others wish to develop other things. [The WSP] makes them look again at their priorities and ensures we can develop disability cricket, for everyone better than we have in the past. (Interview: ECB Disability Cricket Officer).

These new arrangements (funding/targets/contracts) shifted power relations by ensuring that Sport England and the ECB would occupy positions at the apex of the field and that it would be County CCs who would be solely accountable for managing the cricket development of marginalized groups in their respective geographical areas. Below this field/meso-level power realignment, new micro-level, social practices for the implementation of the WSP were needed.

Managing capital

Funding disability cricket

Management practices altered in response to this new funding system. Some perceived this new contractual approach as positive.

Before the Whole Sport Plan, seriously, I had to go back and report on every penny. I spent £6.50 on cups! Now the ECB say, "Here's your half a million and here's some figures – as long as you hit those figures we don't wanna see the money". So, I think the Whole Sport Plan is great. (Interview: SDM, North County CC)

However, others viewed this new system was overly controlling and prescriptive about what would receive funding. As a result, new funders were sought.

Each of the counties seem affected by the WSP and that everything must go through the ECB. The SDM of East County CC stated that she was considering approaching Comic Relief and other funders instead of the ECB, as they were "less bureaucratic". (Field notes)

For others, the contractual approach led to negative impacts, not financially but in the diminishing of inter-personal relations that they felt had existed previously.

And all of a sudden your relationship becomes one which is around contacting to see if monitoring is up to date and to see if this is up to date and not about actually saying "how's the project going", you know, and the sociale interaction that comes with it. (Interview: Programme Manager, BCS)

The implementation of WSP's contracts and funding approach created flux across the field. As can be seen from Table 2 above, some organizations were able to substantially increase their economic capital, which further increased inter-organizational tensions. However, it was ensuring this funding was being properly allocated and quality checked that would cause further concern.

Controlling disability cricket

Performing monitoring and evaluation had been done by agents within this field for some time prior to the WSP, however, from informal conversations with multiple agents, it was felt that this was a more haphazard and inconsistent approach (field notes).

We didn't have to do much to keep the funders happy, usually it was just a report at the end of the program and occasionally some nice photos. No questions were asked really. (Interview: Programme Manager, BCS).

In the WSP era, those voluntary clubs and charities who were contracted to deliver disability cricket were now compelled to produce monitoring data. Some agents proved to be more efficient than others in generating this data. Indeed some agents enhanced their reputation by impressing those above about how efficient they were. The shift from a broad interpretation of monitoring and evaluation to the more quantitative, output focused reporting that the NSO now required ensured

additional quality controls were being adhered to. However, in practice, these quality checks were seldom used and if used, they were limited in their scope.

SDM: So, when the club's monitoring says that they have really high girls' participation, I will go out to see their program. Unannounced. When I arrive, the situation is sometimes different. When it doesn't match up, we use this to challenge them when they submit their reports. (SDM, South County CC)

I: So, you do this with all the clubs?

SDM: Well, not all. We can't do all of them, just the ones that stand out.

A routine approach to quality control was not observed from any agent delivering disability cricket. Most reports were scrutinized when submitted but the visits employed by the South County CC were non-existent from other agents (field notes). Participant observations witnessed how the data was collected and then how it was used. This suggested that the data itself was a symbolic good that generated value for the producer and the receiver. As such, little consideration was given by the funders to assessing the quality of information. Being effective was associated with producing data and producing it on time (field notes). Delays were attributed to organizations not understanding this.

It's one of those things, isn't it? If it's something you're good at, it's not a problem, it's not a pain, it's easy—you just do it! So why is that other bloke in the meeting whinging? A lot of club managers will feel like that but there are a number who, whether it's because of them as individuals in the club or whether it's an organization like [BCS] who it has been more challenging for, and therefore will always feel like a challenge, no matter how easy we make it. (Interview: Development Manager, The Cricket Foundation)

It was observed that the process of reporting up the hierarchy of agents in the field involved prioritizing the monitoring data (the

quantitative indicators of participation like demographics) over qualitative insights about individual impact. For BCS's managers and staff, in particular, the sport-for-good assumptions they held about the purpose of disability cricket were very important to them. These changes, therefore, brought about tension and conflict.

Change and hysteresis in disability cricket

Quantitative targets require consistent and accurate monitoring to be managed in a systematic fashion. This social practice offered knowledge as a form of capital that was exchangeable for economic capital yet created conflict for some agents within the field. For BCS not only did the quantitative output focus not represent what they did, but they questioned how this form of monitoring and evaluation determined good performance. As such, resistance to these practices was justified by the belief of quality over quantity. Staff within *Big City Sports* felt that quality should be based on the ability of a coach to engage young people meaningfully in disability cricket irrespective of a participant's level of sporting competence (Interview: Senior Development Manager, Big City Sports). As this could not be measured, the practice of monitoring was deprioritized within BCS.

While the reconfigured funding system under the WSP had (re)legitimized the role of the ECB, other agents could still deploy resistance. Sport Development Managers at many of the County CCs viewed the program as priority, mainly because the funding was valuable (field notes). Yet, at North County CC, funds received for the WSP were reassigned by senior managers to other programs within the County CC. Short of funds, managers at North County CC used resources from other projects to pay the salaries of staff and cover their development work.

SDM SDO is meant to support me in [women & girls and disability] programs this year but she's had to do some more hands-on work.

SDO: We're having to do lots of other things, [and] there's not enough staff, really, so sometimes that role that I was put down to do is different.

SDM: She was told to coach 100% in a certain area, so she didn't have time to do all the other bits; it's a financial thing. So, she had to deliver another project ... which she shouldn't have been doing ... [but] we needed the money to support her role. (Interview: SDM and SDO, North County CC)

For some protecting the quality of their work became associated with taking a political stance, a rejection of quantitative outputs, but notably not the contractual funds. The WSP challenged the habitus of some within the field, as a result, resistance to these emergent practices arose. This resistance was possibly an embodied response to the changing situations managers and staff found themselves within. For others, the reluctance to distribute the required funds to the development department was a form of resistance by senior managers in the North County CC against the WSP and ECB. As indicated previous, some were unhappy with the new funding arrangements and as the ECB now determined priority areas, this threatened managerial autonomy.

Discussion and implications

The introduction of the WSP arguably simplified the reporting requirements by streamlining an approach that focused on outputs rather than outcomes. However, agents' perceptions of this varied. Across the field, some saw the oversight as increased scrutiny over the delivery of cricket, others sought to exploit the breadth of the WSP targets by re-allocating funds, while for others it was a relief from the burdens of the past. These varying perspectives demonstrate the ambiguity of perceptions at

the micro-level over seemingly precise meso-level, field-wide strategies.

These findings offer insights from multiple levels of the management of disability sport. At the field-level, the repositioning of power relations within the field could arguably be seen as an attempt to address the "fragmented, complex and cumbersome" systems for managing disability sport (Thomas & Guett, 2014, p. 404). The WSP identified areas where participation was deficient and provided dedicated funds for redress. While disability cricket was one part of this, the targets set ensured that it would not remain invisible (Kitchin & Howe, 2014). Like all resources in any field, funding was not shared equally and those with power (reinforced by their already substantial stocks of economic capital) were able to reassert this power through the launch of the WSP and its Single Investment Scheme. This all hinged on the emergence of the contractual commercial logic of managerialism inspired targets that entered into this field of non-elite sport for the first time (Houlihan & Green, 2009).

The substantial increase in economic capital that arose through the WSP engagement between BCS and the County CCs should have supported participation efforts, (as seen previously, Kitchin et al., 2019; Kitchin & Crossin, 2018), yet the new funds created tension between the partners, a feeling of mistrust by BCS over the real motives for evaluation, and a wariness over whether the contracted partner was actually doing their job (see also Howe, 2007 for similar findings in a different disability sport context). Perhaps the managers and staff at BCS were justified to be wary of the increased accountability of the system. Research by Grix (2009) examined how the governance of UK Athletics reflected an elite managerial culture that had grown "out of touch with the grass-roots of the sport" (p. 42) and cared more for managing their relationships with the sports councils/funding bodies than with their grass-roots constituents. Similar thoughts were

expressed by staff at BCS. Nevertheless, the significant increase in their annual incomes (see again Table 2 that demonstrates through increased finance much work being undertaken), suggests that their resistance was more rhetoric than action.

While resistance from the County CCs could be explained as a form of weariness with policy, or sport policy enactment (Hammond et al., 2019; Jeanes et al., 2018, 2019), for the voluntary clubs and charities that delivered disability cricket for the County CCs, this was their first real collective experience with top-down policy implementation and arguably the weariness with policy implementation would not have formed. Indeed, a more nuanced approach is offered by hysteresis which views this resistance at this grassroots level as occurring because of the WSPs disrupting the *laissez faire doxa* that governed the social practices of cricket development in the past (Kerr & Robinson, 2009; McDonough & Polzer, 2012). In a world that now meant that sport development officers and voluntary managers of cricket clubs had to monitor each and every session, some that were featured in this research, only saw the break from the past, and in this context viewed evaluation with suspicion.

There are a number of implications surrounding the communication of change that emerge from the findings of this work. First, it is likely that change will always lead to resistance, but powerful organizations should care to communicate more closely with micro-level agents about the rationales of their plans and how the system can be improved. Practitioners in this study did not engage thoroughly with the policy-level documentation of WSPs and NSO strategic plans, so possibly more appropriate communication tools could have been used. Additionally, similar to suggestions from Thompson et al. (2021) greater clarity is needed by policy makers on how new targets and priorities should be interpreted by sport development staff operating at the micro-level. This clarity may have prevented the

possibilities of funding not reaching the right areas or preventing perceptions about social control from arising.

Research has shown that there is little uniformity amongst monitoring and evaluation practices, no system can work without appropriate guidelines and training should be available (Harris & Adams, 2016). It is possible that a lack of understanding by those in sport councils and governing bodies of how sport development officers actually work at the grassroots levels in various contexts. More training and interaction between these personnel would be advisable. This knowledge could then be used to devise more innovative evaluation methods still relevant to the needs of various stakeholders.

Conclusions, limitations and further research

This research provides important insights into the management of disability sport during the transition from a “nice-to-do” yet often invisible area of sport development into to a contractually governed practice replete with targets and performance indicators. The multilevel approach taken in this paper provides important links between how shifts in power relations at the meso-level impact on social practices at the micro-level. To address research question 1 (*What is the impact of policy shifts on the power relations between organizations in a field of disability sport?*) I posit that the introduction of the WSP and the Single Investment System ushered in a more systematic, if limited reporting system that was more transparent than the former *laissez faire* approach that was used prior to the WSP. The WSP established a contractual logic within grassroots sport development. While the appearance of structural management relations within the field does not appear to change, the underlying power dynamics did. As for research question 2, (*How does change prompt action at the micro-level of disability sport management?*) the findings above suggest

that applying contracts, formal targets, key performance indicators and the like may improve the coordination of this disability sport system, but as the scope of the change was so broad, numerous opportunities arose for resistance. As a result, this study has not only shown how – in this context – organizations accumulate and/or lose economic, cultural, social capital when the rules of the game are redrafted but also the responses that are generated when workers' social practices are challenged.

The contribution of the research is both empirical and theoretical. By using practice theory to reveal how increasing bureaucratization and professionalization of all fields of sport impacts on social practices and identities of those that exist within, I show how multi-level analysis can link the meso and micro levels of analysis and I extend Bourdieu's practice theory to disability sport management. A strength of this paper is that the observations of change were witnessed as they occurred, within a field of disability sport and based on the experiences of those who practice it daily (Fine et al., 2009). I argue that this has allowed the voices of middle managers to populate the findings and as such are more democratic and paint an honest picture of this experience because of the methodology used. Ethnography allowed me to build rapport over time, which then elicited first-hand accounts of change, rather than having to rely on prospective or retrospective viewpoints.

Further research is required into disability sport management and its increasing bureaucratization and professionalization in many western countries. While the focus in this paper of linking meso and micro was important, it is also important for future studies to focus in-depth on the lives of those working through this period of change and possibly track their journeys out of the field when they did occur. Van Amsterdam et al. (2017) stressed the importance of focusing on the embodiment of inequality within sports organizations and it

would have been fruitful (indeed it was a missed opportunity) in this case not to focus more intently on the experiences of the small number of staff who happened to be disabled people and their specific understanding of changes in disability sport.

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