



PhD Studentship

Troubling the Practice of Inclusion and (Re)Homing Disability in Intersectionality: Physical Activity Experiences of Disabled Women with Multiple-Marginalised Identities

Closing date: 24th October 2022

Interview date: 7th November 2022

Supervisory team

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[Research Group: Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity Research Group](#)

[Collaborating organisations: Sport England](#)

The Project

Applications are invited for a fully-funded, full-time PhD studentship for the project entitled:

“Troubling the Practice of Inclusion and (Re)Homing Disability in Intersectionality: Physical Activity Experiences of Disabled Women with Multiple-Marginalised Identities”

Context

There is an established line of academic research exploring the numerous barriers and facilitators of physical activity (PA) among disabled communities (e.g., Montforte et al., 2021; Nikolajsen et al., 2021; Richardson et al., 2017). Research has also indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent PA ‘reopenings’ disproportionately excludes disabled communities as they experience new challenges to accessible PA as well as an exacerbation of pre-existing barriers (e.g., de Boer et al., 2021; Koopman & Pelletier, 2022; Sport England, 2021). Martin

Ginis et al., (2016) argued that to address inequitable access to PA opportunities among disabled groups, scholars must “shift focus from conducting studies that merely describe LTPA (leisure time physical activity) barriers and facilitators to developing and delivering strategies” (p. 478). Now is therefore the opportune moment to set the direction of travel for applied research in this academic space and set an intention for the future development of disability inclusive PA strategies.

At the heart of exclusion in PA is the prevalence of ableism as the norm for practice and behaviour (Adamson et al., 2022). Ableism purports that there is an ‘ideal being’, that is crafted through intersecting, dominant identities regarding gender (male), race (White), sexuality (heteronormative), corporeality (nondisabled), and social class (Campbell, 2009). The hegemony of an ‘ideal being’ marginalises anyone with ‘other’ identities within PA settings such as LGBTQ+ communities (Hargie et al., 2017), women (Coen et al., 2020), people of colour (Dagkas, 2020), disabled people (Richardson et al., 2017), different ethnic groups (Koshoedo, 2015), and low socio-economic strata (Zhang et al., 2021). As people have plural identities, strategies to meaningfully address inequities in PA must look beyond isolated characteristics and appreciate the complex matrix of intersecting identities that may result in multiple levels of discrimination (Crenshaw 2017; Kafer 2013). Whilst there has been a growth in research exploring intersectionality in PA, disability is markedly under-represented compared to other identities (Berghs & Dyson, 2022). Furthermore, society-wide discourses and strategies around equality, diversity, and identity often leave disability as the ‘forgotten group’ (Wolbring & Lilywhite, 2021). Thus, a pertinent and meaningful focus of disability research within intersectionality is the centrality of socially-just approaches to facilitate inclusion in PA settings (Adamson et al., 2022).

The necessity for an intersectional research approach addressing PA inequities is further evident in Sport England’s (2021) 10-year strategy named ‘Uniting the Movement’ which calls for strategies that serves marginalised groups’ equitable PA access. Specifically, this report concludes the existence of “stark inequalities with women, those from ethnically diverse communities, those living in deprived areas, disabled people and people with long term health conditions less likely to be active than others” (Sport England, 2022). Addressing inequities experienced by these groups are a priority within this 10-year national strategy, an effort which the PhD studentship will be a part by (i) strategically developing a new line of applied research situating disability within wider intersectionality discussions and, (ii) informing the creation of resources to bridge the gap between marginalised groups and equitable PA opportunities.

Aims and Objectives

This PhD studentship will address Martin Ginis et al.’s (2016) call to develop and deliver strategies targeting PA inequities among disabled people as well as support target groups identified by Sport England. To heed this call, we will target a particularly significant but, as yet, under-researched group within PA spaces: employees. Employees within PA spaces have extensive influence regarding the degree of inclusion or exclusion consumers experience (Lloyd, 2005). Employees are visual, discursive, and interactive representations of who is/is not welcome in those spaces (Smith Maguire, 2008). Research has highlighted that while employees can be a key source of exclusion to marginalised groups (Neville & Gorman, 2016), they can also be powerful facilitators of inclusive practice that encourage marginalised people to maintain PA across the lifespan (Richardson & Motl, 2020a; Richardson & Motl, 2020b). These individuals may therefore be the crux of the degree to which PA spaces are inclusive, yet this group have received only marginal attention from applied research. This PhD project will target employees as inclusive facilitators by establishing the needs and wants of support from two perspectives: disabled women with multiple marginalised identities and employees. Thus, the objective of this PhD studentship is to address PA inequities experienced by disabled women with multiple-marginalised identities as those relate to PA employees. To do so, a strategic line of research is proposed with the following aims: 1) Develop a conceptualisation of disability and intersectionality within PA settings. 2) Explore what disabled women with multiple-marginalised

identities need and want from PA employees regarding inclusion. 3) Explore PA employees' needs and wants to support marginalised individuals within their respective job role. This combination of conceptual and empirical foundations will contour a structure from which to create resources, training materials and toolkits that can, thereafter, be disseminated and delivered by the University of Worcester and Sport England to inform inclusive practice of employees within PA settings.

Indicative methodology

Design: Coproduction is the involvement of individuals or groups the research is targeting as equitable 'essential research partners' through the entirety of the research process (Alford, 2014). It is a way to venture beyond theory building for theory's sake (Beebejwan et al., 2014), and towards 'living knowledge' that can meaningfully contribute to applied research that seeks wider socio-culture impact towards social justice (Smith et al., 2022). By involving disabled women with multiple marginalised identities and PA employees as partners, we will establish an impactful, applied foundation to this proposed study that ensures; (i) knowledge reflecting our complex, contemporary society, (ii) amplified voices of groups historically excluded from research, (iii) experiences and involvement from individuals embedded within reopened PA settings, and (iv) equitable partner-directed/centred research. In line with the principles of coproduction, the indicative methodology for the PhD studentship will dialogically be informed by research partners, but initial plans are presented below.

Research Setting: The PhD study will focus on the PA setting of community-based/council-run/public leisure centres as; (i) this setting is the most populous PA space that multiple-marginalised individuals attend due to lower costs, connections to public transport, and connections to the local community (Bell et al., 2021), (ii) effective impact through coproduction is most successful within a particular space or field, and (iii) employees may be more receptive to potential changes in their practice as they are not as extensively pressured as franchise gyms to sell commercial ideals (Smith Maguire, 2008).

Sampling and Participants: To capture wide-ranging, varied PA experiences and multiple-minority identities, the PhD student and Sport England will select 3-4 leisure centres across England with different 5 demographics as case studies to do this research. This allows for an appreciation of the different cultures and micro-societies. Within each leisure centre, the PhD student will recruit; (i) disabled women with multiple-marginalised identities, and (ii) leisure centre employees.

- **Disabled women with multiple-marginalised identities:** In line with Sport England's call to target specific marginalised groups, we will focus our efforts on a group of individuals that experience multiple levels of exclusion, that being disabled women of low socio-economic standing. Thus, our inclusion criteria will be individuals that; (i) are over 18 years of age, (ii) identify as female, (iii) have a physical impairment, (iv) receive disability benefits from the government, (v) have experienced some form of exclusion accessing PA, and (vi) are willing to be research partners in this project.
- **Leisure centre employees:** Involvement of any individual that works within a particular community is essential for coproduced work as they provide insight into structural, organisation and professional pressures that may not be well understood by one interest group alone. This allows for resources to be designed that will fit within a specific organisational and structural context and caters for the needs of multiple actors within that specific context. We will recruit employees from various levels of management and policy development that; (i) are over 18 years of age, (ii) work within/specifically focus on leisure centres, and (iii) are willing to be research partners in this project.

Recruitment: A recruitment strategy in coproduction is researchers with an idea approaching potential research partners (Holt et al., 2019). The doctoral candidate will seek partnership with

multiple-minority groups and leisure centre employees. With Sport England's help (and leisure centre agreement), we will recruit participants through; (i) e-mail invitations to employees through the leisure centre, (ii) flyers on leisure centre notice boards, (iii) 6 announcements via leisure centre social media pages, and (iv) the PhD student attending the leisure centre(s), advertising the research, and approaching potential participants.

Data Collection: The doctoral candidate will utilise data collection techniques in line with participatory action research (PAR). PAR closely aligns to coproduction ethos regarding overcoming power imbalances, amplifying voices of marginalised groups in research, and generating knowledge that is as close to 'real' experiences as possible. PAR empowers partners by asking them to choose which type of data collection techniques they would prefer to use. The PhD student will describe what different techniques mean and what is required, but partners choose which method of communication they are most comfortable expressing their own authentic experiences. This may include interviews, poetry, drawings, photography, stories, recordings, etc. This creative, participant-led data collection then generates a rich, in-depth, and accessible knowledge bank that can be used to help develop research publications with essential partners and inform the creation of resources to support employees be inclusion facilitators.

Data Analysis: To achieve the aims of this PhD proposal and align to coproduction design, qualitative analysis and translational methods will be used. Although specific analytical techniques will be driven by the research data, we anticipate the use of creative methods such as ethnodrama being used to produce academic and translational knowledge. Ethnodrama is both a method and methodology where the objective is to cocreate a written play about a particular phenomenon with participants. This is done through the collection of in-depth, multifaceted qualitative evidence (McMahan & McGannon, 2017). In this way, language, tensions, conflict, internal dialogue, feelings, and stories are represented in a powerful and relatable way that remains authentic to real life experiences. This translates to academic outputs as 7 well informing translational methods by providing a script that can be acted, recorded, and shared with others. Such recordings may be used for training purposes in CPD courses.

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Details of the studentship

The studentship is offered for a 4-year period on a full-time basis. The studentship is campus based. During the period of your studentship, you will receive the following:

- a tax-free bursary of £15,609 for 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years (expectation that full time students complete in 3 years. If student enters year 4, bursary stops but fees are still waived)
- a budget to support your direct project costs including dissemination costs
- a laptop and other IT equipment and software as appropriate to the project
- use of the Research School facilities
- throughout this PhD the student will collaborate with Sport England.

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and SSSES/ISPARG. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the School under the guidance of your Director of Studies.

Application Process

To begin the application process for this studentship please go to <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships> and click 'apply now' next to the project you wish to apply for. It is expected that applicants will have the following qualifications:

- A Masters in the area of Sociology of Sport/Exercise/Physical Activity/Disability Studies or equivalent professional experience.
- A First or Upper Second Honours Degree
- Applied experienced of working with disabled and/or other marginalised groups.

It is also expected that applicants will be able to demonstrate the following:

- A sound understanding of and interest in both the project and the wider subject area
- Experience of relevant research methods and skills
- Ability to contribute to the research design of the project
- Proficiency in oral and written English
- Proficiency in IT relevant to the project, e.g. proficiency in using Microsoft Office.
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Ability to work with/alongside organisations supporting marginalised communities.

The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held **on 7th November 2022** online via Teams. Shortlisted candidates will be given at least 7 day's-notice of interview. As part of the interview and selection



process, applicants will be asked to write a short (two-page maximum) reflective piece using the following journal article as an informative framework:

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality--A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research--A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10.

This is available via Google Scholar. If applicants have difficulty accessing, please contact e.richardson@worc.ac.uk

This piece should focus on and explore connections between the applicant's positionality and intersectionality within the context of disability, gender, etc., and physical activity.

Alongside the interview, shortlisted candidates will also be asked to give a 10-minute presentation on a related topic.



Research at the University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. The outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF 2014) showed that Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure. The University's continued progress was shown in the outcomes of REF 2021 which demonstrated that both the scale and quality of our research has further increased, with over 40% of our research recognised as world-leading or internationally excellent.

The University has been successful in winning funding from a wide range of major funders: Research Councils such as AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC and NERC; major charities such as the Leverhulme Trust, the Alzheimer's Society and the British Academy; health-research funders such as the NIHR, the Department of Health and local NHS Trusts; European funding through Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+; and funding from local, national and global businesses.

The University is focused on research which addresses real world challenges and provides solutions to these challenges:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The University continues to provide a robust infrastructure for research. It has a well-established Research School which houses its growing research student body and which provides a comprehensive programme of researcher development for staff and students. It has a well-

established Research Office, responsible for research funding, governance and strategy. The University is committed to further developing its research profile, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. Its fully-funded studentships are part of this investment.

Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

School Sport and Exercise Science

The University of Worcester has a proven record of excellence in the field of sport and exercise science, with extensive opportunities to offer anyone who has an enthusiasm for sport, exercise and health.

We have a multi-purpose indoor sports centre, two floodlit synthetic pitches, an exercise physiology suite, two further sports science laboratories, nutrition laboratory, teaching rooms, gymnasium and dance studio. Recent major developments have seen the introduction of the award-winning Riverside Building and the 2,000 seat Worcester Arena.

Our innovative Motion and Performance Centre is situated on the St John's campus has expertise in a wide range of areas, ranging from Physical Activity, Exercise and Health to Biomechanics and Sport and Exercise Physiology.

The School of Sport and Exercise Science has developed and supported research that is impactful, and both locally and globally recognised. Priority areas for research include Physical Activity, Health and Wellbeing and Disability Sport. We have a broad range of ongoing research projects in these areas. For more information about ongoing research that is directly connected to this project please explore the [Inclusive Sport and Physical Activity](#) Research Group page.

Widening Participation

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.



For further information or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Dr. Emma V. Richardson (Director of Studies) via email at e.richardson@worc.ac.uk

Applications can be made at:
<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>