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Published online: 26 Sep 2016.

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ABSTRACT

While sport for development programming has flourished, the complex social and economic environment in the postcolonial Eastern Caribbean is often overlooked by researchers. This case study examines sport for development with 'at risk' adolescent girls in St. Lucia ($n = 16$). These young women, who have been removed from mainstream public schools due to behavioural issues, participated in focus group discussions regarding their experiences and perspectives on sport. Their sport participation included single-sex, organised programming at the Upton Gardens Girls Centre and mixed-sex, unsupervised football play. Results of the study indicate that these sporting activities contributed towards the capability development of the participants, with limitations toward challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging kinetically focused body image. While the female-only sport participation encouraged a positive sense of self-efficacy and fostered peer/mentor relationships, engagement in co-educational football supported girls' empowerment and the challenging of gender stereotypes. However, outcome towards progressive perspectives on sport and body image gleaned mixed results. As a whole, these results point to larger concerns within the sport for development field and the need for more in-depth and comprehensive critical research to better understand how sport impacts development initiatives.

Introduction

Sport participation is often thought to provide positive benefits on education attainment, gender equality, self-efficacy and health in developed and developing societies (Levermore and Beacom 2009). The United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), recognizes that sport participation can have dramatic effects on young peoples' lives and support development initiatives. Sport also has the capacity to reduce gender-based stereotyping and discrimination by challenging gender expectations and empowering females to independence and success (Brady 2005; Darnell 2011; Hartmann-Tews and Pfister 2003; Meier 2005; Saavedra 2009). In sum, sport often serves as a 'social good' or tool for social and economic development.

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However, social science scholars have been reluctant to accept sport as an effective mechanism for development (Coalter and Taylor 2010; Jarvie 2012; Levermore and Beacom 2009). In particular, sport for development and peace (SDP) research has been criticized for its lack of in-depth research and evaluation. Claims that sport can address social and economic ills are often 'vague and lack theoretical and policy coherence', and may be 'overly romanticized', (Coalter and Taylor 2010).

Purpose of the study

This article critically examines sport as a tool for youth development among 'at risk' girls in the small Eastern Caribbean island of St. Lucia. Through a case study methodology, this study explores the complex relationship between sport, gender and the development of human capability. The objective of this research is to *better understand how these sport experiences influence the capability development of 'at risk' adolescent girls at the Upton Garden Girls Centre.* The specific themes of human capability in SDP explored are self-efficacy, empowerment and challenging gender norms, peer and mentor relationships and body image. This project contributes to the emerging body of knowledge on sport for development around the world in the often-overlooked context of the Caribbean, providing a unique case study resource and critical perspective.

Literature review

The context of St. Lucia

St. Lucia is a relatively small Caribbean island by size (606 km^2) and population (approximately 180,000 residents). Situated among the Windward Islands in the eastern Caribbean Sea, the island is among the six independent states and two British territories included in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) (Hornick and Matheson 2007). After nearly five centuries of colonial rule (by the Dutch, French and English), including more than 200 years of slavery, St. Lucia became independent from the United Kingdom in 1967. Today, one-third of the population lives in the capital city of Castries. Most of the citizens identify 'black' or 'Afro' as their race/ethnicity (Hornick and Matheson 2007).

Although considered an 'upper middle income' economy by the World Bank, St. Lucia has a relatively high level of poverty. Nineteen per cent of its population lives below the national poverty line and St. Lucia is classified as a 'medium human development' country by the UNDP (CIA, 2014; UNICEF 2006). Declining exports, a result of changes in British trade policy, caused a dramatic shift in the St. Lucian economy in the 1990s. Unemployment rates have risen steadily since 1996 and were last measured at 20% in 2003. Tourism is now the mainstay of the economy, accounting for 65% of GDP (CIA 2014). This industry proved vulnerable in the global economic crisis of 2008 and has remained stagnant or in decline ever since (World Bank 2014). However, the data on wealth distribution are scarce and many key world development indicators such as the Gini Coefficient, Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) are unavailable (UNDP 2013; World Bank 2014).

'At risk' youth in St. Lucia

The economic decline, including increasing poverty and unemployment rates, has left many children and young people in vulnerable states. A 2006 UNICEF study classified more than half

of the children in St. Lucia as 'at risk'. UNICEF defines 'at risk' children as those who are exposed to certain risk factors such as poverty, child abuse, crime and caregiver insecurity (2006).

Among those risk factors are poverty, caregiver insecurity, child abuse, drugs and crime, living with a chronically ill parent, exposure to HIV/AIDS and poor health care (particularly reproductive/sexual health). A 2007 study by the University of Calgary defines at risk as children vulnerable to harm (physical, sexual or psychological) and/or to 'significant impairment in growth and development, educational development, health and emotional well being …' (Hornick and Matheson 2007). Below is a selected review of the UNICEF and University of Calgary studies, which are the most recent in-depth studies exploring child vulnerability and at risk children in St. Lucia. In both studies, poverty is a causal factor for a panacea other risk factors.

St. Lucian children are often exposed to crime, domestic violence, absent parents and child abuse. Family court records in St. Lucia indicate increasing numbers of children affected by rising crime rates. Homicide and domestic violence rates have increased since 2000 and the most common form of domestic violence is assault on women, which increased 35% from 1998 to 2004 (Hornick and Matheson 2007). Furthermore, parental union instability and 'child shifting' are noted risk factors for St. Lucian children. The UNICEF study noted that high numbers of children lived without a father in the home, often due to incarceration or death. These situations can create instability and displacement for the child, which then tends to expose children to other risks, such as child abuse (UNICEF 2006).

In St. Lucia, sexual abuse was the most highly reported form of child abuse and girls are overwhelmingly more likely to be sexually abused than boys, particularly in adolescence. The Calgary report noted that understanding the extent of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, in St. Lucia is nearly impossible (Hornick and Matheson 2007). There is, however, some data on the reports of child abuse, which indicate increase in reporting of abuse (ILPA 2012). Clearly, children exposed to such abuse are highly at risk. St. Lucian girls, in particular, are vulnerable.

Theoretical framework of sport for development

This study is built upon the theoretical framework of human capability development. Specifically, the human capability approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum serves as the overarching theory. I have applied this framework to the field of sport for development, while also examining current SDP research on sport as a contributor towards improving self-efficacy, empowerment and challenging of gender norms and building social affiliation among peers and mentors.

Human capability development theory goes beyond traditional economic measures to examine the potential and capability of people. The crux of this approach is to create an environment of freedom, choice and opportunity so that people can pursue, with agency, a life which meets their needs and interests, (UNDP 2013; Sen 2000). Elements such as education, freedom and gender equity are central themes in this theoretical concept. Martha Nussbaum elaborated on these elements and developed a particular focus on gender and human development. While Nussbaum never directly discussed sport as a factor in the development of human capability, her work is reflected in research on sport, gender and development.

Many studies show that sport has the capacity to contribute to human development through building human capability (Brady 2005; Coalter and Taylor 2010; Groenmeyer 2010; Levermore and Beacom 2009; UNOSDP 2008). The UNOSDP reports direct social benefits of sport participation, such as fostering social inclusion, increasing self-efficacy, promoting gender equality, building empowerment (especially for girls and young women) and promoting healthy attitudes

and behaviours (UNOSDP 2008). These benefits, though not inherently found in sporting activities, are key building blocks towards the human capability development objectives identified in Sen and Nussbaum's framework. Additionally, organized sport programmes can serve as a platform for communicating important ideas on health, education and social issues (Coalter and Taylor 2010; Levermore and Beacom 2009; Nauright 2015).

Among the benefits cited in SDP research, self-efficacy serves as a building block to healthy personal development (Coalter and Taylor 2010). This concept is widely defined as a person's belief in his or her ability to achieve goals and outcomes or influence events in her/his life (Bandura 1994). SDP research often cites building self-efficacy as an objective in sport for development (Levermore and Beacom 2009). Sport may be effective in fostering self-efficacy due to the 'emphasis on practice, skill development, mastery and learning from defeat', (Coalter and Taylor 2010). Self-efficacy is best explored in the context of facing challenges. A strong sense of self-efficacy serves as motivation or incentive to take on challenges and persevere through difficulties (Bandura 1994).

As Nussbaum proposes, social affiliation is a key element to human well-being and a platform for human development (Nussbaum 1999). One common theme across SDP studies is the capacity for sport to support social inclusion and connectedness among participants and between participants and mentors (Brady 2005; Dagkas and Armour 2012; Groenmeyer 2010). Sport often generates a sense of belonging and can bridge social distance. People who feel marginalized by poverty, race, gender or other factors may find sport as a way to connect to others on a 'level playing field' (UNOSDP 2008). Of course, sport can also create social barriers and further marginalize people, such as the poor, who may not have the same levels of access to sport as those in more privileged groups (Levermore and Beacom 2009; Nauright and Parrish 2012).

Building positive peer and mentor relationships is a key element to youth development (Blum et al. 2003; Cunningham 2003). Sport activities and programmes can provide valuable opportunities for young people to gather in safe spaces to socialise (Brady 2005). For girls and women particularly, the networks of support established in communal sport and the feelings of accomplishment through learning and playing with other girls and women can provide enormous benefits (UNOSDP 2008). Several SDP studies show that these networks can provide support, recognition and public identity of females beyond those that are typically prescribed to the domestic realm (e.g. daughter, sister, wife, mother, etc.). Female participants in sport programmes have cited social interaction, group identity and friendship as important elements of the sport programming. Notably, sport can also expose female participants to exploitation and sexual abuse (Brady 2005; Saavedra 2009)

Central to the theoretical framework of feminism and development is the concept of empowerment. Kabeer defines empowerment as the ability to make choices (Kabeer 2001). In this context, the expansion of opportunities for girls and women to play sports reflects the social change implied in the term empowerment (moving from a lack of choices to the opportunity for choices). Sport is often considered the domain of the masculine, however, gender barriers in sport are reducing and girls around the world are gaining more access to the power of sport (Hartmann-Tews and Pfister 2003). Sport participation is one tool to help empower girls and women. Precisely because sport is commonly perceived as masculine, the inclusion of girls and women in sport can challenge existing gender stereotypes and norms. Still sport programmes must be carefully designed with local languages, customs, concerns and infrastructure in mind or risk merely reinforcing the long-standing resistance to girls playing sports (Brady 2005; Saavedra 2009).

While females have gained ground, claiming more choices and greater empowerment, an imbalance towards sport development programmes for males still exists. The majority of existing programs around the world, and particularly in the Eastern Caribbean, are still predominantly male, with some co-educational and few exclusively for females. Expanding opportunities for females by adding to existing male-only programmes or by creating new co-educational programmes may be considered an 'integrative' approach, as proposed by early feminist theorists such as Esther Boserup (Boserup 1989). Integration into existing male dominated structures is often criticized by postmodern feminists and gender and development (GAD) scholars as falling short of real social change (Meier 2005; Okin 1997).

Integrating girls and women into patriarchal sport structures can diminish the impact of sport benefits or even reinforce gender norms by requiring female participants to adapt to programmes designed for males (Chawansky 2011; Saavedra 2009). Structural changes and new sport programmes directed and reserved for girls and women have also emerged. These programmes, such as the Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTGK) programme in Kenya, provide sport and physical activities specifically for girls and women with curricula designed towards addressing their unique development needs (such as empowerment, sexual health and gender equality). Female only programmes such as MTGK could be considered a post-modern feminist 'transformative' approach (Chawansky 2011; Okin 1997; MTGK n.d.). The nature and impact of programmes, whether co-educational or female-only, is highly dependent on the qualities of the programme and the specific cultural context.

Gender as a social construct in the Eastern Caribbean has evolved towards greater equality in many aspects (CARICOM 2003). However, important indices, such as the Gender Development Index (GDI) are not available for St. Lucia. In other Eastern Caribbean countries, the GDI indicate that Caribbean girls and women enjoy relative gender equality. Most Caribbean nations, including St. Lucia, have sought to comply with the United Nation's Convention on the Discrimination of all Women (CEDAW) resolution. However, in this region, women are still at a disadvantage in labour markets and underrepresented in government. A Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) report also indicates that girls and women face unequal outcomes in terms of education (CARICOM 2003). Furthermore, scholars have found that girls and women in the Eastern Caribbean are highly vulnerable to gender discrimination, sexual assault and abuse (Barrow 2007; Blum et al. 2003; UNICEF 2006). Other scholars note that a male-dominated, hegemonic culture exists throughout this region and serves as a disempowering influence to girls and women (Parpart, Connelly, and Barriteau 2000)

Finally, cultural concepts of body image influence development efforts, particularly for females. At a basic level, male body image is centred on how bodies *act*, while female body images are focused on how bodies *look* (Cash and Pruzinsky 2004). Ideal male bodies should be strong and muscular, demonstrating physical prowess and ability. Female body ideals are framed aesthetically, with emphasis on thinness and conformity to feminine attractiveness (Cash and Pruzinsky 2004). In the sport context, females, particularly adolescents, expressed concern over developing overly muscular bodies through sport participation. This concern can discourage young women from sport participation (Slater and Tiggemann 2011). Body image worries marginalize girls in sport and may prevent them from gaining the stated benefits of sport on personal development. This problem may be of particular concern among Caribbean adolescent girls, who have been shown to display low levels of body image satisfaction (Barrow 2007).

Limitations of SDP

Sport programmes may actually expose children and adolescents to danger or harm. For girls, sexual abuse from coaches is a real concern (Brady 2005; Saavedra 2009). Additionally, bodily injury through sport, by traumatic injuries such as a broken bone or overuse injuries from training, are also potential hazards (UNOSDP 2008).

Beyond these concerns, one must examine if the resources put into sport for development programmes are being used to their full potential. It is unclear if sport programmes are the most effective way to promote physical activity, health, gender equality, girls' empowerment, etc. Better resources at schools or art and music programmes may be equally or more effective and efficient. One of the main arguments for the benefits of sport for development programmes is the element of social inclusion as a positive development factor. However, scholars caution that the benefits of social inclusion may be overstated as an effective means of human development to challenge poverty and gender inequality (Van Staveren 2003).

The discussion on poverty and access to sport, recreation and physical activity also casts doubt on the effectiveness of sport for development. Studies show that poor people tend to have less access to the healthful resources of sport and recreations (Panter, Jones, and Hillsdon 2008). While sport itself may hold many positive development elements, poverty clearly serves as a negative mediating factor towards human development goals through sport.

The Upton Garden Girls Centre

In the bustling capital city of Castries, the Upton Garden Girls Centre serves many young women caught up in the cycle of poverty and abuse in St. Lucia. These girls between the ages of 12–17 come to Upton Gardens due to behavioural problems at mainstream public schools or cases of neglect or abuse in the home ("Introducing Upton Garden Girls' Centre" 2009). According to their website, they are referred to the centre by school officials, social services, family members or other adults. Upton Gardens is the only such rehabilitation and counselling service available to young women on the island and has been in operation since 1980. With space limited to serving up to 25 students at a time, Upton Gardens accepts students referred by social services (in the case of abuse and neglect), schools, parents and other adults.

They offer a two-year 'rehabilitation' programme that focuses on continuing education (math, literacy, health), life skills and job training. Students attend daily classes on these subjects, although they are not required to attend or complete the programme. Additionally, Upton Gardens provides counselling services to students and families. Supported by government and corporate funding, the mission of the Centre as posted on their website is to 'provide a quality day care rehabilitation service in a conducive environment to abused, disadvantaged and neglected young girls through high community involvement, timely and appropriate interventions and effective case management'. Currently, planning is underway to complete a residential facility at the centre to house girls who would otherwise return home to abusive or neglectful environments ("Introducing Upton Garden Girls' Centre" 2009; personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Physical education and sport are supplemental programmes offered at least once per week. A FIFA certified (male) coach conducts weekly football sessions. Various other sporting

activities are offered less regularly; including dance, swimming and netball. These additional sport activities are sponsored in collaboration with a Girls2Women SDP programme through the Australian Sports Outreach Programme (ASOP) and a St. Lucian SDP organisation called the Sacred Sports Foundation (Alexander 2012). Prior to this research, many of the participants had completed a salsa dance programme at Upton Gardens. However, that programme had been cancelled because the instructor left. Several participants also engaged in sporting activity, both organised and casual, outside of Upton Gardens.

According to the Director of the Upton Gardens Girls Centre, sport activities are included in their programme offerings primarily to foster 'social and life skills' such as working in groups and overcoming challenges (building self-efficacy). Additionally, the sport elements provide an opportunity for exercise and offer a fun outlet that keeps the participants interested in returning to the programme. Ms. St. Paul also considered sport an important aspect in challenging gender norms and expectations, especially for young women who often feel marginalised and stigmatised because of poverty, abuse and exclusion from school (personal communication, March 3, 2014).

Methods

A case study approach was chosen for this study and qualitative methods were employed through focus group discussions. Because of the limited number of participants, low levels of literacy and the uncertainty of their attendance (several left or completed their stay during the study), focus group discussions were considered effective methods in conjunction written surveys and journaling, which were also conducted. Additionally, this verbal methodology is highly valuable when working with children and adolescents (Armour and MacDonald 2012). However, this project included methods beyond those presented here in this paper. I also conducted surveys and journaling exercises with the participants and interviewed the Director of the centre. Those findings are still in the analysis phase for later publication.

Focus group discussion topics were drawn from the primary themes used in a 2010 UK Sport study on sport for development in the Global South (Coalter and Taylor 2010). The themes included empowerment and challenging gender norms, self-efficacy and peer/mentor relationships. These themes were considered relevant because they closely align with the overarching goals of sport for development among at risk girls. These themes also aligned with stated programme initiatives at Upton Gardens and fall within the framework of SDP and human capability development.

This project took place in two research phases. Phase I occurred in October of 2013 (4 weeks) and Phase II in May of 2014 (3 weeks). A total of five site visits took place. During the October 2013 data collection, nine (9) girls participated in these discussions. In May of 2014, nine (9) girls also participated. Two (2) of the girls from the fall were also in the spring group and therefore participated twice. The total number of individual participants was 16. They were split into three (3) different discussion groups. In the fall, one group included four (4) girls while the other had five (5). In the spring, all nine (9) girls joined in on the same group discussion. The researcher was the only other person present during the discussion sessions. No teachers or administrators were permitted in the room. Each session was audio recorded.

Following the sessions, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes. A systematic approach to coding was employed, with key words and phrases coded into themes. Data were coded based on themes from Coalter's study (inductive). Text that did not fit these predetermined themes were also coded and categorized into new themes (deductive). Researcher field notes were included in the analysis, as the group dynamics were observed to influence the direction and intensity of the discussions (i.e. highly vocal participants tended to steer the conversation)

Findings

These discussions were guided by the researcher's predetermined themes as discussed above; (1) challenging gender norms and empowerment (2) self-efficacy and (3) peer/mentor relationships. One additional theme was deduced from the data; (4) body image. Results and discussion of each theme is found below.

Challenging gender norms and empowerment

The girls participated in a variety of sport activities in organised and casual forums. They unanimously and enthusiastically agreed that both boys and girls should have access to sport of any choice. As empowerment refers to the opportunity to make choices (Kabeer 1994), their assertion represents a sense of empowerment regarding girls in sport. Additionally, their participation habits generally reflected a rejection of conscribed gender roles in sport. However, regarding the most masculinised and feminized sports, they tended to follow gender norms of the Caribbean, such as playing netball (a highly feminised sport) rather than basketball. Furthermore, their attitudes regarding girls' ability to compete well in sports and their assertion that girls were just as good at sports demonstrated a rejection of common cultural assumptions that boys are better suited for sport than girls.

Football, running (athletics), swimming, netball, volleyball, gymnastics and skipping rope were the sports they played the most. Although cricket is a very popular sport in this country, only one of the girls discussed having played cricket. As a social norm, this sport is generally reserved for males in the Eastern Caribbean (Lewis 2003). Football, though played across genders, is still considered a masculine sport form here as well. By contrast, non-contact sports such as volleyball, gymnastics and skipping rope tend to be considered more feminine in the Caribbean (Sutherland 2012).

Their strong and unanimous belief that both girls and boys should have equal access to all sports reflects a challenging to the gender norms in this region and a sense of empowerment. In this way, sport in general seems to provide these girls with an outlet to dispute restrictive cultural expectations. Additionally, their participation in football, a masculinised sport, demonstrates their own agency and empowerment to take action outside of traditional gender roles. Their conviction in challenging such norms is reinforced by the fact that most of their football participation falls outside of the organised programme at Upton Gardens. In other words, they actively seek out opportunities to engage in football play despite the fact that this sport is considered more suitable for boys than girls. They feel empowered to step outside of gender norms and pursue their own interests.

On the other hand, only one girl discussed cricket, the iconic sport of the region and one that is widely reserved for boys and men. Above all other sports, cricket represents the traditional male hegemonic sporting ideal in the Eastern Caribbean (Darlington et al. n.d.; Lewis 2003; Sutherland 2012). Their lack of participation in cricket reflects a limitation in the power of sport to break down gender barriers. However, all participants agreed that girls do have the right to play cricket and should be granted access to the sport.

The girls also identified a gender-based restriction for males playing sport. During the spring focus group discussions, all nine girls agreed that it was abnormal for boys to play netball. Basketball is for boys and 'girls have netball', stated one participant. Netball is a non-contact adaptation of basketball traditionally reserved for females (Nauright 1995). Several other girls chimed in saying that there is also basketball for girls. But when asked if boys played netball, most girls laughed and shook their heads no. One girl stated that some boys do play netball and that was 'ok'. Other girls laughed at that statement and it was unclear whether or not they were being serious about boys playing netball. Although they agreed that girls could play basketball if they wanted to, it was generally agreed upon that it was abnormal for boys to play netball. It was not, however, 'unacceptable'. The only explanation given for this division was that sports were traditionally played in this way in St. Lucia. Again, their participation habits (playing netball rather than basketball) reflect conformity to gender norms.

Their responses also reflected a challenging of gender norms in *how* girls and boys played sports. They felt strongly that boys were not inherently better at sports than girls. One participant ("Addy") stated that:

> Some of the time girls play better than the boys … because girls used to be told and are some-times still told, that they shouldn't play football, then they started playing and if the girls were really good then that would show the boys that they could really play …

All five participants from this discussion agreed with her perspective. Their views indicated a rejection of cultural expectations that boys are better suited for sport than girls (Sutherland 2012). Several participants spoke of physical strength and aggressiveness for girls as a positive quality while playing football. In football, "Bree", claimed that 'bouncing', or pushing opponents (boys, in this example) was good. When asked if she felt that the boys liked being bounced by girls during football, she replied, 'they have to because that's how football is'. The groups all discussed strength and assertiveness as an asset for girls in sports and felt that sport encouraged these characteristics.

Self-efficacy

As discussed in the literature review, self-efficacy is a key component to building human capability and can be honed through sport by facing the challenge of developing skills (Blum et al. 2003; Coalter and Taylor 2010). Furthermore, improving self-efficacy is often a primary objective in the field of sport for development, especially for at risk youth (Coalter and Taylor 2010).

Although many discussed playing football, the organised football programme at Upton Gardens was rarely mentioned. Instead, they focused on neighbourhood and less organised forms of mixed gender football. In discussing this sport, the girls focused on how football

playing was tough, challenging and presented an opportunity to be aggressive, especially when playing with boys. Bree, a participant who took a leadership role throughout the discussion, said:

> It can be fun and challenging to play them with those boys. But some boys are rough and when you play football you have to bounce them. But I enjoy bouncing the boys! … It makes you find that it is more challenging and it is more difficult to score so that makes it fun.

Her response demonstrated a nature of competitiveness and aggressiveness found among these girls that is not in sync with gender norms in St. Lucia, as discussed in the above section. More pertinent to this theme is her reference to enjoying being challenged. We know that facing and overcoming challenges is an important avenue in building self-efficacy (Bandura 1994; Coalter and Taylor 2010). The other girls in the group seemed to approve and agree with her response, though they did not readily contribute their opinions.

Addy discussed how sport provides an opportunity to embrace challenge, especially for girls. She continued her statement regarding girls playing football as follows: '… a team of girls might feel more ambitious because they have to prove themselves. So the boys would take it for granted but the girls have something to prove'. The others nodded in agreement. Here, football serves as a unique challenge in many ways. Because football is commonly reserved for boys and males are assumed to be better suited for the sport, girls competing against boys face an additional challenge beyond that inherent in the sport activity. They strive not only to play well, but to prove the prowess of their gender. Facing and overcoming this challenge can enhance the self-efficacy of these young women. Notably, none of the participants discussed falling short of proving themselves on the pitch against boys. Whether they always achieved their goals is unclear, but it did not seem relevant to the conversation. Their focus was instead on the opportunity for the challenge and their fondness in engaging in these sporting experiences.

Peer and mentor relationships

Human capability literature and SDP research refer to social bonding and positive peer and mentor relationships as critical contributors towards overall personal development (Brady 2005; Coalter and Taylor 2010; Levermore and Beacom 2009; Nussbaum 1999). The participants overwhelmingly agreed that sport participation, especially within the Girls2Women salsa dance programme at Upton Gardens, helped them build healthy bonds with peers and mentors.

Most participated in the salsa dancing sessions, which took place at the Upton Gardens facility and included only female participants (from Upton Gardens) and a female instructor. The programme had been cancelled in the spring of 2013, when the instructor left. Those who had participated noted that it was 'fun', 'relaxing' and provided them a unique opportunity to work together as a 'team'. In dance class, they bonded over the challenge of learning steps and the joy of achieving their goals. The discussions over the dance class was centred on social aspects of the sport, as opposed to the conversations on football, which focused on physicality and overcoming challenge. The all-female dance sessions seemed to create a safe environment for them to learn and bond outside of normal classroom activities.

One key element discussed at length was their relationship with the instructor, "Kathy". All groups agreed that her communication style was effective. 'The way she talked to us wasn't harsh and she was a great salsa teacher', stated Addy. The girls agreed that she was respectful towards them and listened to their perspectives. Addy continued on to say that,

'if you, like, forgot the moves the first time, she helped you learn it. If we were behind the group, she would teach you, but didn't get frustrated'. They all agreed that she was 'patient' and that her primary goal was for them to enjoy salsa dancing, rather than to be perfect dancers. The girls felt that the Kathy was proud of them. 'She always said that in salsa … we are a team and that it wasn't perfect but that it didn't have to be', stated another participant. When asked if they always got their way with Karen they replied, 'no, not always. But we always enjoyed it and tried it … and we were a team'. The girls went on to discuss the social elements of salsa dancing. They especially enjoyed dancing together with each other and the instructor. The sense of social bonding over this activity was strong, both participant to instructor/mentor and peer-to-peer.

When asked about their relationship with teachers at Upton Gardens, they're moods seemed to shift. One focus group agreed that they do not get the same feeling from teachers that they did from the instructor. 'They don't listen, but they don't understand', said one girl. Although they agreed that they had positive relationships with the teachers, they acknowledged more strains in these mentor relationships. They described the role of teachers with terms like 'discipline', and 'control'. By contrast, all focus groups used the words 'relaxed', and 'listens' in their descriptions of Kathy. For both teachers and Kathy, they used the terms 'supportive', and 'caring'. When comparing their relationship to Kathy with their relationship to their teachers, this group agreed that the teachers had a different role to fill that required more strictness than Kathy. The dance instructor seemed to fill a unique mentor role beyond a teacher or family member. The dance lesson context allowed the participants to engage with a trusted mentor in a fun and relaxed setting without the burden of daily disciplinary rules that exist in the classroom setting. Kathy, in particular, was adept in creating an environment for these important social bonds to grow.

Overall, the mentor and peer relationships discussed through sport were overwhelmingly positive. Their instructor was able to lead this group effectively and build unity among the participants to strive for goals as a 'team'. However, after about a year of service, Kathy moved on and no longer taught dance lessons at Upton Gardens. Like so many others in the lives of young people in St. Lucia, this trusted adult was not a longstanding influence.

Body image

Discussions regarding body image fluctuated from empowering, progressive views on strength, fitness and health for women (i.e. it was good for girls/women to have fit bodies) to restrictive and hegemonic perspectives (i.e. muscular legs look bad on girls). However, even when discussing fitness, health and the body of females in a progressive sense, the context for the conversation tended to revolve around appearances and attractiveness. It seemed that their relationship with their bodies was rooted in an aesthetics rather than kinetics, as commonly seen in the literature discussed above on body image (Barrow 2007; Cash and Pruzinsky 2004). In contrast to prior studies on body image among Caribbean adolescent females, these girls demonstrated high levels of body satisfaction.

We also discussed body image as related to sport and physical activity. The responses regarding gender, sport and the body were mixed. 'If you play sports, your calves are getting hard. That's bad. Getting muscles is good for men, but not for girls', stated "Chandra". They then called muscular calves 'Tina Turner calves' and laughed about it. Others disagreed with the girl who made this statement. When asked if playing sports was attractive, they

said boys would like a girl who played sports and had a fit body. They mentioned playing tennis and getting a good, athletic body. Chandra stated:

> The girls get muscles, they have the body … it make them (boyfriend) feel proud or good that she can have what she want. So even a girl that is really strong and weight training, a guy would feel like she could protect herself.

Some girls nodded in agreement while others did not demonstrate support nor disagreement. When asked if perhaps guys would want to feel like they are the protector instead, she replied 'Sometimes. But it's ok to have some of both …' The others voiced agreement. They also referenced the importance for women to be strong in order to 'protect' themselves. One can conclude that these girls felt that self-protection was important. It is clearly a part of their lives they pay attention to.

Health and fitness were also discussed at length. Each group was asked about staying fit and all agreed that it was important to their health. They also agreed that they now get messages regarding health and nutrition and that in St. Lucia the obesity problem is increasing. They felt that sport was a good way to stay healthy and care for their bodies. None of the girls classified themselves as 'overweight' and many girls, including the entire third focus group ($n = 9$), professed that they were all at a healthy weight. In contrast to prior studies indicating Caribbean adolescent girls struggle to develop healthy body image, these young women were overwhelmingly comfortable with their bodies even proud. One conclusion to make is that these girls must walk a fine line between balancing their sport and fitness goals and their wishes to remain physically attractive in a traditionally feminine way.

Conclusions and future research

The perspectives of these young women support many of the claims of SDP research. Particularly, that sport can challenge gender norms and support girls' empowerment, improve perceived self-efficacy and foster positive peer and mentor relationships. However, the type and extent of benefit varies, as discussed above. And their mixed views on sport and body image often conformed to restrictive gender stereotypes that females should not appear to muscular. Sport for development scholars and practitioners should therefore interpret this study with caution, noting that not only does sport as a development tool include clear limitations in this case study, but also that sport may in fact reinforce negative aspects of youth development, particularly regarding gender role attitudes and body image.

What is clear, however, is the importance of a positive and trusted adult mentor. Sport has a unique position within the development sphere to connect such mentors to the young people who benefit from their influence as coaches or instructors. Without the daily burdens and responsibilities of a teacher or parent, the sport coach can bond with participants and serve as a motivator for personal development and well-being. Their dance instructor was able to challenge them, building self-efficacy and social cohesion in a way that is generally unattainable for other adult mentors. And the sporting setting served as a supportive *and* relaxed environment, fostering social bonding not readily available in the more disciplined classroom environment. Unfortunately, their trusted instructor left. A limitation to the benefit of sport in peer-mentor relationships may be that they are less-likely to maintain lasting relationships than teachers or family members.

Finally, I conclude that these girls benefited differently from the female-only, organised sport programme (dance) than from the co-educational, non-programme-related football

play. In the conceptual argument over development within traditional male-dominated frameworks (integrative approach) versus establishing new frameworks for female-focused development programmes (transformative approach), this study demonstrates that a combination of both approaches in SDP may be optimal in this context. Given the specific cultural context of gender in the Caribbean, which emphasises traditional characteristics of male-dominance such as strength and assertiveness, the rough football play and strong sense of empowerment expressed by the participants is a positive result of sport in their lives. At the same time, the girls-only dance programme honed different aspects of personal development not emphasised in the football play (social affiliation). In tandem, the integrative and transformative approaches to SDP in the Caribbean are more effective for these girls than either approach on its own.

The challenge to better understanding SDP outcomes among these girls, and in the broader region of the Caribbean, is capturing data on co-educational sport play. In particular, studies on street football may serve as a valuable resource to understanding the impacts of sport on girls' empowerment and gender attitudes. Additionally, a study on sport coaches and instructors would also illuminate the nature of the peer-mentor relationship in Caribbean sport.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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