

Integration of Paralympic Athletes into Athletics Canada

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

This paper explores the integration of Paralympic athletes into Athletics Canada. Highlighting the charitable foundation of sport for the disabled as well as the issue of classification, this paper offers insight into the habitus of Paralympic athletics as a key factor influencing this integration process. Integration is conceptualized on a continuum of compliance where true integration is the goal and segregation is frowned upon. Using ethnographic data collected in participant observation roles as an athlete, administrator, and journalist, the paper illuminates the success of the Paralympics in capturing the imagination of the Canadian public. At the same time, the process of integration within Athletics Canada has been less than successful because the achievement of athletes with disabilities is not as valued, by those who administer the sport, as those of their "able" counterparts. To this end the integration process within Athletic Canada appears to be stuck at the uncomfortable point of accommodation, which means that a truly integrated sport system is still a goal to be achieved.

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This paper explores the integration of Paralympic athletes into Athletics Canada. Highlighting the charitable foundation of sport for the disabled as well as the issue of classification, this paper offers insight into the habitus of Paralympic athletics as a key factor influencing this integration process. Integration is conceptualized on a continuum of compliance where true integration is the goal and segregation is frowned upon. Using ethnographic data collected in participant observation roles as an athlete, administrator, and journalist, the paper illuminates the success of the Paralympics in capturing the imagination of the Canadian public. At the same time, the process of integration within Athletics Canada has been less than successful because the achievement of athletes with disabilities is not as valued, by those who administer the sport, as those of their "able" counterparts. To this end the integration process within Athletic Canada appears to be stuck at the uncomfortable point of accommodation, which means that a truly integrated sport system is still a goal to be achieved.

Résumé

Ce document examine l'intégration des athlètes paralympiques à Athlétisme Canada. Ce document, qui fait ressortir l'œuvre de charité que constitue le sport pour les personnes handicapées ainsi que la question du classement, présente un aperçu de l'habitus de l'athlétisme paralympique comme facteur clé de ce processus d'intégration. L'intégration est conçue comme un continuum de conformité où la véritable intégration est l'objectif et la ségrégation est mal acceptée. Au moyen de données ethnographiques qu'il a recueillies à titre d'observateur comme athlète, administrateur et journaliste, l'auteur de l'étude démontre le succès qu'ont remporté les paralympiques en faisant appel à l'imagination du public canadien. Par ailleurs, le processus d'intégration à Athlétisme Canada n'a pas été un aussi grand succès parce que les réalisations des athlètes handicapés ne sont pas valorisées par les administrateurs du sport, comme celles de leurs homologues non handicapés. À cette fin, le processus d'intégration au sein d'Athlétisme Canada semble se limiter

à une certaine tolérance; par conséquent, l'objectif d'un système sportif vraiment intégré n'est pas encore atteint.

Introduction

This paper offers an insight into the difficulties associated with integrating Paralympic sport into Athletics Canada. Athletics Canada is the National Sports Organization (NSO) for track and field athletics and, as such, receives core funding from Sport Canada, which is a branch of the International and Intergovernmental Affairs and Sport Sector within the federal Department of Canadian Heritage. Publication in 2006 of *No Accidental Champions* (Canadian Sport Centres 2006) highlights the importance the government is placing upon the integration of elite sport for the disabled¹ within Sport Canada. The development of policy in Canada that will lead to the integration of sport for the disabled into mainstream sport reflects the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) desire for this process, which it has been expressing for some time (Labanowich 1988, Steadward 1996, Vanlandewijck and Chappel 1996). A policy shift away from a disability centred model of sporting provision at the elite level within Canada aims to enhance the competitive opportunities as well as educating the public about [dis]ability as it relates to high performance sport (Steadward 1996).

Canada has played an important role in the transformation of the Paralympics from a movement focused on opportunity and participation to one where excellence through high performance training is the sole aim. Indeed, the first president of the IPC was Canadian Dr. Robert Steadward and his tenure in office (1989–2001) saw the IPC forge closer links with the Olympic Movement. Benefits include long-term financial support, access to high quality facilities in which to hold the Paralympics, and countless other commercial benefits. An agreement between the IOC and IPC was signed in 2001 to formalize these closer ties. In 2003 this agreement was amended to transfer “broadcasting and marketing responsibilities of the 2008, 2010, and 2012 Paralympic Games to the Organizing Committee of these Olympic and Paralympic Games” (IPC 2003, 1). Agreements such as this will ease financial concerns for the IPC and allow the Olympics and Paralympics to be marketed as a single entity, thus transforming sport for the disabled from a pastime to a high performance sporting spectacle (Howe 2004).

Attempts toward such integration, both in Canada and in an international context, have occurred relatively recently. This paper uses ethnographic data to examine the integration process currently being undertaken by Athletics Canada to determine whether or not truly inclusive NSOs are becoming a reality. Ethnographic methods have been successfully adopted in the fields of anthropology and sociology (Bernard

1995, Burgess 1984, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Primary to this approach is the use of participant observation, including direct quotations, where I collected what are commonly called field notes. These notes are effectively a diary of observations that are later interpreted and analyzed. Field notes are used as data to help the ethnographer piece together the cultural world under investigation. In the case of this particular research, I adopted various participant observer roles within Paralympic athletics (as athlete, administrator, and journalist²) during which I took field notes. The semi-structured interview is another ethnographic tool that has been adopted to collect the data on which this paper is based.

By linking field notes, interviews, and material collected from the print media, this paper aims to show that the habitus of Paralympic athletics has an influence upon the process of integration within Athletics Canada. First this paper will briefly examine the use of the concept of integration as it relates to sport.

Integration within Sport

The integration process that is being undertaken by Sport Canada is seen as important if an inclusive society is to be achieved. Integration, broadly speaking, is the equal access and acceptance of all in the community. Some scholars have distanced themselves from discussion of integration since the concept implies that the disabled population are required to change or be normalized in order to join the mainstream (Oliver 1996, Ravaud and Stiker 2001). In other words the concept of integration requires members of the disabled community to adopt an “able” disposition in order to become members of the mainstream. However, scholars working within sport studies have adopted a concept of integration that is useful in the current exploration of Athletics Canada. Sørensen and Kahrs (2006), in their study of integration of sport for the disabled within the Norwegian sport system, have developed a “continuum of compliance” that aims to explore the success of their nation’s inclusive sport system. Within this study, integration, where both athletes with disabilities and those from the mainstream adapt their cultural systems, is referred to as *true* integration. Where athletes with a disability are forced to adopt the mainstream culture without any attempt at a reciprocal action is seen as assimilation. Finally the least integrated model is seen as segregation, where neither group is willing to transform its core cultural values in spite of being jointly managed within the sport system.

For the purpose of this paper it is the process of successful integration, which allows an inclusive society to be established, that is most relevant. If society is going to become more inclusive “it is necessary for existing economic, social and political institutions to be challenged and modified.

This means that disabled people [sic] are not simply brought into society as it currently exists but rather that society is, in some ways, required to change" (Northway 1997, 165). *True* integration therefore has to be undertaken in order to establish an inclusive NSO.

This conceptualization of integration reflects recent work that argues that integration can be effectively understood as an outcome of an inclusive society (van de Ven et al. 2005). More specifically it is argued that "[i]ntegration occurs through a process of interaction between a person with a disability and others in society" (van de Ven et al. 2005, 319). In other words, it is the process of interaction between an individual with a disability who possesses his/her own attitude toward integration, strategies, and social roles and others in society who adopt certain attitudes and images of people with disabilities. As a result factors that influence the success of the integration process are both personal and social but also include an element of support provision that will be distinct depending on the severity of the individual's disability (van de Ven et al. 2005; see also Kelly 2001).

It is possible, for example, to see *true* integration as a literal intermixing that entails the culture of both groups adapting to a new cultural environment. Dijkers uses the term *community integration* to articulate his concept of *true* integration. Community integration, according to Dijkers:

is the acquiring of age, gender, and culture-appropriate roles, statuses and activities, including in(ter)dependence in decision making, and productive behaviours performed as part of multivariate relationships with family, friends, and others in natural community settings. (1999, 41)

True integration therefore is "a multifaceted and difficult process, which although it could be defined at a policy level rhetoric, [is] much less easy to define in reality" (Cole 2005, 341). The difficulty when exploring the success of integration policies is that the balance between the philosophical position and the reality (in this case a cultural sport environment) is not always clear. Simply exploring the policy landscape means that any interpretation is devoid of explicit cultural influences, though all policy is a cultural artefact. This being said, the aim of integration is to allow the disabled to take a full and active role within society. The ideal would be:

[a] world in which all human beings, regardless of impairment, age, gender, social class or minority ethnic status, can co-exist as equal members of the community, secure in the knowledge that their needs will be met and that their views

will be recognized, respected and valued. It will be a very different world from the one in which we now live. (Oliver and Barnes 1998, 102)

Within the context of high performance sport this aim is hard to achieve. By its very nature, elite sport is selective, as Bowen suggests: "Within professional sport, though, all but the super-able 'suffer' from 'exclusion or segregation'" (2002, 71). How then can we establish whether integration has actually been a success within an institution such as Athletics Canada? In reality "sport isolates individuals, but only those who are *super-able*. The rest are left to the realm of the minor leagues, masters' leagues, local tournaments, or backyard pick-up games" (Bowen 2002, 71). This understanding of sport makes it difficult to address the issue of integration. It is important, however, that Sport Canada achieves true integration at the high performance end of the spectrum in order to send a clear message regarding the positioning of people with disabilities within Canadian society (Canadian Heritage 2000, 2002, Green and Houlihan 2005, Canadian Sport Centres 2006). In order to fully understand the success or failure of integration within Athletics Canada it is important to explore certain elements of the habitus of sport for the disabled and it is to this issue that the discussion now turns.

Paralympic Athletics Habitus

In the investigation of the social organization of distinctive sporting environments such as the Paralympic Program within Athletics Canada, Bourdieu's notion of habitus is a useful concept (1977, 1990). Habitus can be understood as habitual, embodied practices that collectively comprise and define a culture. For Bourdieu, habitus informs social action as grammar structures language; allowing for multiple forms of expression through the body, whether that be how the body moves or how it is covered (Bourdieu 1984). Social agents are players in a game, actively working toward achieving a goal with acquired skills and competence but doing so within an established structure of rules, which are only gradually transformed over time. Habitus predisposes action by agents but does not reduce them to a position of complete subservience. In other words habitus is the nexus between the decisions individuals make and the structured environment in which they play a part. In his book, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu demonstrates that structured physical activity is a cultural product that is both shaped and transformed by individuals who administer and practice within that framework.

An individual's habitus is the embodied sediment of every encounter they have had with the social world. It can be used in the present to mould perception, thought, and action to the extent that it has an important role

to play in decisions that an individual might make in future encounters. In this sense actors can be seen not simply to follow rules but also to bend them much in the same way as the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1965) highlights improvisation as being fundamental to an individual's disposition. Dispositions, or more generally forms of social competence, may be viewed as a product of well-established social environments. While society may be seen as shaping people, it needs individuals' improvisations from time to time if it is going to evolve. Therefore it is as important to see the body as being as much a product of the self as it is of that society. It is the self that provides improvisation by drawing upon the sediment of previous social encounters.

The theory of practice developed by Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) identifies the nexus between the body and its social environment. In a sporting context, the games metaphor that is employed by Bourdieu (1984, 1990, 1993) highlights the nexus between capital and field. The multiplication of a player's disposition, their competence (*habitus*), and the resources at their disposal (*capital*) in relation to the social environment highlights the social actors' position in a field. In the particular environment such as sport for the disabled it is the embodied disposition or *doxa* that enables a social exploration of the distinctive character of sporting *habitus*.

Within the field of sport for the disabled, one component of this particular *habitus* is the charitable mandate of International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled (IOSD). Canadian affiliates of the IOSDs—namely the Canadian Amputee Sports Association, Canadian Blind Sports Association, Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association, and Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association, all of which have related provincial organizations—were founded to look after sporting provision for particular groups of people with disabilities. It was the role of the Canadian members of the IOSDs to organize national competitions across the sporting spectrum, as well as select the national squad for various international events. Due in part to the relatively small number of competitors involved in sport for disabled in Canada, the explicit intention of these organizations was the creation of opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved in the practice of sport. As a result, these associations did not have strict performance criteria that athletes had to meet. A charitable ethos that entailed dispensing assistance to people with disabilities through the IOSD network meant that early national teams were made up of many non-elite performers who it was felt “should be given the opportunity” to compete internationally as one official commented.

It was the IOSDs and their predecessors that helped to organize the Paralympic Games from 1960 through to 1988. The fact that these games

were staged at all is a testament to the commitment of those involved with the IOSDs. Official sponsors and suppliers were in short supply and my own personal involvement, and that of all athletes, required us to raise funds to attend the Paralympic Games in 1988. Those who could not raise the funds were replaced by athletes who were less proficient but were better fundraisers. Early Paralympic Games, as a result, placed less emphasis on high performance and more on the opportunity for international participation. This is not to say that elite athletes were not involved, but that participation was the main imperative.

The charitable ethos of the IOSD-led Paralympic Games means that participation (over performance) is still, in part, a central component of Paralympic athletics habitus. Another related element of the habitus is the classification system employed in Paralympic athletics and the debate surrounding it. A complex classification system is the result of the historical development of sport for the disabled (Steadward 1996, Vanlandewijck and Chappel 1996, Daly and Vanlandewijck 1999). The classification system was established by the IOSDs to allow for fair competition, making it somewhat distinct from able-bodied sports provision (Jones and Howe 2005, Howe and Jones 2006). Classification is simply a structure for competition, similar to the system used in boxing, weight lifting, and judo, where competitors perform in different weight categories. Within sport for the disabled, competitors are classified by their body's degree of function; therefore it is important that the classification process achieves equity in Paralympic sporting practice and enables athletes to compete on a "level playing field" (Sherrill 1999).

As far as the IOC and IPC are concerned, the classification system developed by the IOSDs, and until recently used within sport for the disabled, detracts from the Paralympic Games as a sporting spectacle because it confuses spectators (Steadward 1996, Smith and Thomas 2005). Debates about the legitimacy of various classifications are central to Paralympic habitus and they are also important when considering the integration of athletes with disabilities into mainstream sporting contexts. The Paralympic athletes who receive the greatest exposure are, in fact, the most "able"; that is, the least impaired. Nevertheless, the ethnographic material on which this paper is based highlights the difficulties faced by even the most high-profile athletes in Paralympic sport. Since these individuals are struggling with complete acceptance it is important to remember that others are probably more marginalized than those discussed here.

A classification system, known as integrated functional classification, where athletes with a disability who are members of an IOSD are placed in a competition category regardless of their disability, has been used in most sports since the early 1990s (Howe and Jones 2006). However, there

has been resistance to changing the classification system developed by the IOSD and much of the politics I observed as a member of the IPC Athletics Committee surrounded the issue of how the athletics classification system could be improved. Classification in athletics is based on what disability an athlete has (amputee, blind, cerebral palsy, or wheelchair) and the extent to which the degree of impairment affects the athlete's physical performance.

The process of classification makes a distinction between the physical potential of athletes and attempts to achieve an equitable environment in competition whereby the successful athletes in each class will have an equal chance of accumulating physical capital (Jones and Howe 2005). In reality, however, there are a number of factors that impact the accumulation of capital (both physical and cultural) in various classifications. The first factor is the number of athletes within a particular event. If there are simply a handful of competitors (a common situation in the most severely impaired classes) then the amount of capital that can be accumulated is limited. In some classes there may only be six athletes from four countries (the IPC minimum for eligible events), which means that winners are less likely to receive the same kudos as an athlete who has defeated twenty competitors. Another important factor, in terms of whether winners ultimately gain capital from their involvement in sport, has to do with the nature and degree of their impairment. In the social environment surrounding elite sport for the disabled there is a hierarchy of "acceptable" impairments within the community of athletes where the most severely impaired are marginalized (Sherrill and Williams 1996, Schell and Rodriguez 2001).

Paralympic athletics habitus has been shown to include both the charitable foundation of the IOSDs and the process of classification within sport for the disabled. Both of these components of the habitus of Paralympic athletics can be seen, in part, as reasons why *true* integration has been a struggle within Athletics Canada. The remainder of the paper will explore why this is the case.

Paralympic Athletics Comes of Age

Events in Sydney 2000 marked the zenith of the Paralympic movement as the games benefited tremendously from sharing the same organizational structure of the preceding Olympics at the behest of the sports "mad" Australian public. According to athletes and officials, the organization of the games was second to none and the performances within the various sporting arena were of the highest quality—none more so than the women's T54³ 800m wheelchair race that captured the attention of the international media. What follows is an extract from a field diary started

during the 2000 Paralympic Games involving Chantal Petitclerc, perhaps Canada's most recognized Paralympic athlete, who has been one of the top female wheelchair racers in the world for over a decade.

* * *

Sydney, Australia—October 22, 2000: This evening there was a classic confrontation on the track at Stadium Australia. Just weeks after the media frenzy that marks the Olympic Games, the Paralympics are producing their own drama. Unlike twenty years ago, a large collection of the world's press are present and tonight one of the blue ribbon events of the athletics program—the women's T54 800m wheelchair final—was taking place. The women's 800m and the men's 1500m wheelchair races have a special place in the history and development of high performance sport for the disabled. Since 1984 these events have held demonstration status at the Olympic Games. By 1993 the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) also included these events as demonstrations in their bi-annual world championships. These two wheelchair races have done a great deal to showcase the ability of Paralympians. Performances produced by the athletes involved are superior in terms of time achieved for the distance in comparison to ambulant Olympian. For the public this may be the only opportunity they get to see Paralympic athletes in action, as the demonstration events are slotted into the regular Olympic program.

For the first time the Olympic and Paralympic Games were marketed to the world as a single entity. The enthusiasm for the Paralympics by the sport "mad" Australian public has been great, with over a million tickets sold across all venues. This evening the Australian Paralympic team's answer to Cathy Freeman—Louise Sauvage—is racing the 800m and, as with Freeman, Australia expects! Sauvage has been so dominant in women's wheelchair racing that since 1993 she has won every IAAF and Olympic demonstration event. The event today was destined to be another reaffirmation of her physical superiority over the other elite women. Having won the Olympic demonstration weeks earlier in Sydney, the Paralympic outing would be a "wheel" in the park.

The most captivating quality of sport is its ability to surprise. In the 800m this evening, eight of the world's most talented women wheelchair racers compete in a keenly contested final—powerful torsos draped in the latest Lycra racing gear in a luscious rainbow of national colours. From the waist up these athletes are as chiselled as any on the planet. This is definitely not an event for the faint-hearted. Rivalry here is as vicious as anywhere in sport. On the first lap there was some jostling, as can be expected in all 800m races, and this is one of the reasons that the IPC stipulates that wheelchair races that are not run in lanes (800m – marathon)

require all athletes to wear a helmet. The physical nature of this race was not, therefore, unexpected.

Down the back straight an accident occurred behind the leading athletes, including Sauvage. There was another surprise for the partisan crowd: Canadian Chantal Petitclerc soundly defeated Sauvage. Petitclerc, while a vastly experienced athlete, had seldom managed to get the better of Sauvage and never, until this point, on the world stage. Sauvage had finished second, the look of despair on her face evidence of how much the defeat hurt. In contrast the celebration of Petitclerc conveyed delight at realizing a dream. In tomorrow's paper Petitclerc will be quoted as saying, "I dream about Louise more than I do my boyfriend," (Evans 2000) a clear indication of how much this victory meant to her.

The drama did not stop there. The host nation was not happy. Australia filed a protest to have the race re-run because one of their athletes, Holly Ladmore, had been involved in the crash. Race referees disqualified Ireland's Patrice Dockery for leaving her lane before the break in the back straight and set the race to be re-run in a few days time. Outraged Canadian officials appealed the decision knowing full well that the Australians protested because Sauvage had lost the race. Canada's appeal sighted the fact that the crash had occurred behind the chief protagonists. A long and frustrating debate ensued into the small hours of the next morning. Canada's appeal was ultimately upheld and the result was confirmed as official.

* * *

The result of the women's T54 800m at the Sydney Paralympic Games can be seen as a watershed for several reasons. It was the first time that rivalries took centre stage at the Paralympics—often seen as a hallmark of professional sport that is worthy of public consumption (Whannel 1992, Smart 2005). As rivals Petitclerc and Sauvage fit into the classic athletics mould made famous by Englishmen Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovett at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. Petitclerc is small and graceful, not unlike Coe, and Sauvage is a powerhouse with immense physical talent, one of the chief ingredients attributed to the success of Ovett. The victory in this event and the controversy surrounding it brought Petitclerc to a much wider audience and numerous sponsorship deals followed.

After the surprise victory by Petitclerc, Sauvage continued to have success on the IAAF stage, winning demonstration events in both 2001 and 2003. Petitclerc proved to herself and her fans at the 2002 Commonwealth Games that her victory over Sauvage in Sydney two years earlier was not a "flash in the pan." The Manchester Commonwealth

Games marked another crucial development in Paralympic sport. Petitclerc, Sauvage, and others in the women's 800m wheelchair were competing for the first time in a mainstream athletics event that had full medal status. After her second victory over Sauvage, Petitclerc was clear that it was the status of the race that was the real achievement: "It is a very special medal. No matter who might have won this gold medal, it would have been an historic occasion" (Kalbfuss 2002). Without question this victory in Manchester was a personal achievement for Petitclerc. However, the historical importance of this event in achieving elite status for wheelchair athletes is of greater significance, in terms of progress towards *true* integration on the international stage.

Since the 2000 Paralympic Games, Petitclerc has been treated as a hero by the Canadian press and applauded by the public as a role model for high performance athletes across the country. In relation to other Canadian Paralympic champions she is, in part, the acceptable face of sport for the disabled—photogenic, charismatic, high functioning, and an international winner. By its very nature, however, some athletes who are world and Paralympic champions are excluded from the media spotlight. Petitclerc is a very able user of a wheelchair and while she is one of the best within her classification there are other Canadians, also great champions, who compete in different classes and who do not get the same degree of attention. As a result, issues and debates surrounding classification continue to be of concern (Wu and Williams 1999). The lack of equity of treatment of champions is just one issue facing Athletics Canada in its attempt to integrate athletes with a disability into its mainstream programs.

Integration within Athletics Canada

The move of elite disabled track and field athletics into Athletics Canada was preceded by the integration of swimmers with a disability into Swimming Canada in 1994. In 1997 high performance wheelchair users—members of the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association—became part of Athletics Canada. The other national affiliates of the IOSDs, who all continue to be funded by Sport Canada, entered into negotiation with Athletics Canada in 1998 to have their elite athletes integrated. By 2002 high performance athletes who were the responsibility of the IOSDs were included officially within the framework of Athletics Canada, though they had become unofficial members of Athletics Canada while negotiations continued with the various disability sports organizations in the late 1990s.

The advent of a Paralympic manager within Athletics Canada in 1999 was facilitated in part because of Sport Canada's desire to see sports inte-

grated across its programs. At this stage the role and responsibility of the manager was to liaise with Sport Canada primarily about funding (carding) for the athletes. The Athletes Assistance Program (AAP), which has, in various forms, provided financial support to elite able-bodied athletes for several decades, was now available to Paralympians. This funding program is designed to offset some of the costs of training but, unless the athlete is supported by family members, does not facilitate full-time athlete status. Nevertheless, opportunities such as this within high performance sport for the disabled represent a coming of age for Paralympic sport. The adoption of more comprehensive funding for athletes with a disability within Athletics Canada is also an important step in validating these athletes as "high performance." To many within the Paralympic program, acceptance within the mainstream able-bodied organization and its funding scheme is seen as justifying the hard work and energy put into their training. A Paralympian who has competed at the international level for almost a decade stated:

Finally after years of hard training I am getting my reward. When I started training Paralympic athletes were not considered worthy of financial support. I believe the fact that AAP is available to athletes with a disability goes some way to showing our acceptance within the Sport Canada system. (Field Notebook 2004: 56)

There is a perception within the Paralympic program that some athletes gain the benefits of carding and support from Athletics Canada while not having to work as hard as others because the classification system advantages some impairment groups. A veteran of several Paralympic Games elaborates:

It really does not seem fair that people such as them should get funding. I mean look at the physical state of [him]! Are we to believe that he has done the appropriate type of training? His gut is offensive. If I were to let myself go like that I would be nowhere near fit enough to make the team. What does it say about the depth of his class when he can get carded and be in such bad physical shape. To some of us the fact that [he] is part of the Athletics Canada program makes a mockery of the term "high performance." (Field Notebook 2004: 50)

The issue highlighted above is of concern to a great many of the carded athletes. In other words, carding should be a perk for those who train seriously. In essence a carded athlete should see training as a full-time occupation, in spite of the fact that carding money alone is not enough to sustain an individual with no family, friends, or sponsors to rely on. If

some athletes are not committed to training, their carding becomes devalued. Another athlete expressed similar sentiments but was also clear about the differences between Paralympians.

I do not care whether some athletes can win medals without training. It seems to me that if you are being funded by Sport Canada you have a responsibility to be as well trained as possible. I would say that at least a quarter of the team need to train harder. They simply haven't got the commitment that I think a high performance athlete should have. (Field Notebook 2005: 14)

To many of the athletes, being carded reduces the financial burden of training. However, this carries an important responsibility. Receipt of the money necessarily imposes an obligation on the athlete to devote considerable time to training. In this respect the athletes that are funded by Athletics Canada can be divided by their commitment to performing at their best, with all that entails, and those who are simply taking the money. Athletics Canada currently has forty AAP cards to give out to athletes on the Paralympic program and observational and interview data suggests that anywhere up to fifteen percent of these athletes are not training as effectively as they could be. This may be a direct result of many of the athletes being "products" of the IOSD disability specific system, the sediments of which still exist in Paralympic athletics habitus. A lack of communication between the national coaches that are part of the Paralympic program and athletes might be exacerbated by the fact that Athletics Canada only looks after high performance disabled athletes. While Athletics Canada maintains a degree of responsibility for grass-roots development in mainstream athletics (Green and Houlihan 2005) they have limited contact with potential athletes for the Paralympic program. This can make talent identification problematic and if the Paralympic program needs to card a certain number of athletes (or lose the funding) they will return to known athletes who may be a product of the participation model established by the IOSDs.

The image of an athlete with a disability who does not undertake training at the level expected of a high performance athlete can have negative consequences for the organization of Paralympic programs. Structurally the Paralympic program at Athletics Canada is included within the provision of services but it is clearly not truly integrated.

Athletics Canada is organized broadly into four event areas: endurance, speed, power, and Paralympic. In other words, an athlete with a disability who runs 5000m is the responsibility of the Paralympic Program. If the Paralympic program was *truly* integrated the event areas might replace the

Paralympic area with wheelchair racing as the latter is distinctive to running. Athletes would then be the responsibility of their own athletic sub-discipline. To further highlight the lack of integration, athletes profiled on the organization's webpage are also highlighted by their impairment group. By implication, a javelin thrower with cerebral palsy is not of the same status as his or her "able" equivalent.

The status of the Paralympic program within Athletics Canada does not currently represent *true* integration. Following Sørensen and Kahrs (2006), the system at Athletics Canada can be seen as a form of integration that is somewhere between assimilation and segregation. This is demonstrated again by Chantal Petitclerc who had an excellent athletics season in 2004, winning the Olympic demonstration T54 wheelchair 800m. Several weeks later at the Paralympic Games, Petitclerc broke three world and one Paralympic record on the way to winning all five races she contested. The phenomenal performance of Petitclerc on the track meant that the media spotlight intensified. At the end of this remarkable year she was honoured internationally at the sixth annual Laureus World Sports Awards as the best disabled athlete, by news magazine *Maclean's* as "Canadian of the Year," and voted "Woman of the Year" by Canadian women's magazine *Chatelaine*. After such accolades, Petitclerc was "honoured" by Athletics Canada by being jointly made "Athlete of the Year." Petitclerc refused to accept the award she was to share with 100m hurdler Perdita Felicien, a world-class athlete and world indoor champion who fell at the start of her final in Athens.

Accommodation of the Paralympic Program

While the public in Canada celebrated Petitclerc's success, there are still problems related to the integration of Paralympic athletes into mainstream athletics. A lack of integration manifests itself in such a way that Sørensen and Kahr's (2006) typology of integration, which can be seen as a continuum between *true* integration and segregation needs to be further expanded. Between assimilation and segregation is where Athletics Canada's current integration model stands. This position can be termed "accommodation" because, although there is little acceptance within Athletics Canada of the value associated with the Paralympic program, elite athletes with a disability are still governed by Athletics Canada. In spite of Petitclerc's triumphant 2004 season, the joint award of Athlete of the Year devalued her achievements and demonstrates the second class status of the Paralympic Program. She said of the award:

To me, it's really a symptom that [Athletics Canada] can't evaluate the value of a Paralympic medal—that it's easier to win a Paralympic medal than an Olympic medal. That may

have been true 15 years ago. That's not the case any more.
(Wong 2004)

In the events in which Petitclerc competes, the depth of the field is as great as any in able-bodied athletics. At the Olympic Games and other mainstream track and field athletics events there are only ever a handful of likely winners of the top prize. At the Paralympic Games the only difference is that the winners are drawn from nations that are often the most technologically advanced, particularly in wheelchair racing. The problem, according to Patrick Jarvis, former president of the Canadian Paralympic Committee and one of the few former Paralympians in a position of significant power within the movement, is that:

We get many supportive comments as Paralympians. But as soon as you start to incur in their [able-bodied athletes] territory, being respected just as equal athletes and you threaten to win some of their awards, a lot are still uncomfortable with [disability]. (Christie 2004)

If the shoe had been on the other foot and Felicien had won her race and Petitclerc had not won all she contested would the honour have gone to both athletes? Presumably not.

Conclusion

In spite of Canada being at the forefront of human rights legislation regarding discrimination on the grounds of disability, *true* integration at all levels of sport is clearly not happening. In 1982 the Canadian Government enacted the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which includes disability as a prohibited ground for discrimination. On November 25, 2003, the Secretary of State for Physical Activity and Sport, Paul DeVillers, announced the creation of a working group to examine the issues related to sport and disability. This raises questions about Sport Canada. Why has such a group been launched over two decades after it was illegal to discriminate against people with a disability in Canada? Perhaps the following statement made by an Athletics Canada official during an international event in 2005 highlights the struggle that the Paralympic program faces: "You guys are almost as serious as the able-bodied program." (Field Notebook 2005: 17)

To the public, the integration of Paralympic athletes within the matrix of Athletics Canada may be seen as a statement of a progressive nation. Nevertheless, integration within Athletics Canada has not been complete and, as a result, heightens the social division between the able and the disabled within high performance sport in Canada. While Athletics

Canada has attempted to integrate athletes with a disability by branding them as products of their organization, these gestures have done little to address the inequities within the organization that favours the "able" athletes. Although the processes of accommodating the Paralympic Athletics Program within Athletics Canada has been relatively successful, integration or the intermixing of persons previously segregated has not.

Endnotes

1. It has been widely accepted within disability studies circles that a person-first approach should be adopted when addressing athletes with a disability. In this paper I have stuck to this convention except when referring to sport as an institution. In such cases I use the phrase "sport for the disabled" in stead of "disability sport" because through my research it has become clear that sporting provision for the disabled is part of what might be labelled a "disability industry" (Albrecht and Bury 2001). Therefore, because Paralympic sport is run largely by the "able" the phrase "sport for the disabled" seems appropriate.
2. I was a Paralympic athlete from 1985 until 2003, and was an athletics technical official (1996–2003). In 2004 I worked in Athens as a journalist reporting on the sport of athletics. Within all of these roles I was able to take numerous notes and, as a result of my participation, was able to sustain a position in the field that facilitated the data collection for this paper.
3. T54 is an event classification. The "T" says that this is a track event. The "5" says that it is an event for a wheelchair athlete and the "4" means that the athlete is a highly mobile user of a wheelchair.

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