

A qualitative study of the impact of the London 2012 Olympics on families in the East Midlands of England: Lessons for sports development policy and practice.

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Abstract

The dynamics and culture of families are central to individual and community sport and physical activity participation. This research project examined the lived experiences and day-to-day realities of the London 2012 Olympics from the perspectives of five families in the East Midlands region of England. The aims of the project were to assess the influence the Games had on shaping family sports participation, influencing social and health relationships within the families through sports and reactions to the 2012 Olympics. The study was conducted through the generation of rich qualitative data from pre and post Games interviews as well as production of video diary data by the families and young people themselves to gather micro level information on the realities of 'legacy' for families. Findings from this research project illustrate that prior parental socialisation into sport shaped current attitudes to legacy and children and mothers and fathers had mixed reactions to the actual presence of legacy. There are also clear sports development challenges around accessibility, cost, project design, the non family-friendly nature of some schemes present during the potential consumption of legacy that have consequences for future research in this embryonic area. Implications from the study include the need to locate the family as a more central concern for policy makers in sports development practice. The study has questioned the assumed virtuous legacy of the London 2012 Games from the perspective of families on a day-to-day micro level. Instead, a far more complex and diverse picture from the perspective of the family has been presented that requires further critical research on this little explored topic of policy and practice in sports development.

Key words family sports development Olympics participation legacy

Introduction

Family relationships are considered of central importance to the development of sports participation in young people and the adults (Birchwood, 2008; Eime, 2013; Kay and Spaaij, 2011; Kenyan, 1974; Oliver, 1980; Sport England, 2002; Wheeler, 2012). The central aim of this research was to ascertain whether young people and their families changed their sports participation and establish attitudes, meanings and values attached to sports participation due to the presence of the London 2012 Olympic Games. Increasingly, sport policy makers are making more pronounced calls upon families and their associated levels of sports participation and physical activity to deliver social welfare goals linked to health, obesity and a range of associated medical conditions (Coalter, 2007; WHO, 2009; DCMS 2002; BHF, 2013). It has been identified in the context of the family that “arts, sports and cultural activities are all regularly deployed to engage the disaffected, divert the criminally intended, enhance the wellbeing of the inactive and build social capital and citizenship among the isolated” (Kay, 2009; 2). The context for this paper is the London 2012 Olympics Games after London successfully won the bid to host the Games in 2005 under the leadership of Lord Sebastian Coe. At the final bid presentation in Singapore he made the pledge,

“Today London is ready to join you to face a new challenge, to provide an enduring sporting legacy...We can no longer take it for granted that young people will choose sport...London’s vision is to reach people all over the world and connect them with the inspirational power of the Games so that they are inspired to do sport” (Coe, Singapore, 2005 cited in Veal et al, 2012; 163).

Herein lies part of the rationale for this research project which aims to establish understanding of the impact and experience of the London 2012 Olympics Games from the perspective an examination of families in the East Midlands area of England. In particular, it

aims to refocus attention away from what Hylton and Morpeth (2012) refer to as the ‘seductive narratives’ of London 2012 to the multiple experiences and lived understandings of those families and young people far removed from the physical host city. In doing so, it will help inform the challenges facing community sports development practice and policy that sit beyond the glare of the Olympic torch as it rested in East London.

London 2012 Olympics: One happy legacy family?

It has been well established that the evidence base for delivering an increase in sports participation through hosting a mega event is weak (Coalter, 2004; Veal, 2000; Veal 2003; Veal, 2012; Weed et al, 2009; Wong, 2012). It should be stated that the focus of this article is on social and sporting participation impact and therefore consideration of the other wider economic, political and environmental impacts that have been well documented (Davies, 2012) are beyond the scope of this article. However, what was unique about the London Games was that for the first time in Olympic bid history a government proposed a sports participation increase as a direct result of winning the Games (BOA, 2005: DCMS, 2007). Some have suggested such claims have been fetishised and imbued with magical connotations that remain very distant from the everyday realities of local populations both in East London and more geographically distant communities (MacAloon, 2010).

It is important to identify that the Games were sold and originally obtained by the New Labour government, but, then post-2010 election, were delivered by the Conservative and Liberal Coalition government. The previous New Labour government’s strategy for sport *Games Plan* in 2002 had specifically outlined that a sports participation increase would be

unlikely to be delivered through hosting international sports mega events. In a full turn around only three years later they then stated London would deliver a legacy for all groups in all regions across the UK (BOA, 2005; DCMS, 2007). The Government department for sport's policy document *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (2012) further solidified earlier claims that established the expected positive future 2012 legacy and upwards trajectory of sports participation. Indeed other past events had not yielded such changes, as Veal identified in relation to the Sydney 2000 Olympics where the evidence itself is not positive (Veal, 2000; Veal 2003). A study by MORI (2004) analysing sports club membership change after the hosting of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 found reductions in participation post-Games. Table 1 below illustrates changes in participation rates based on the Sydney 2000 Olympics (Veal, 2012). Here, it is apparent that there is no evidence, in particular in those sports that are part of the Olympic Games as having a catalyst effect on overall aggregate participation and in individual sports. Perhaps most surprising was the estimated decrease in 16 individual Olympic sports posts-2000 Games.

TABLE 1 INSERT

The focus in much of the literature is on analysis of the policy makers and machinery of legacy development in government (Devine, 2013, Girginov and Hills, 2008; Mackintosh, 2012a), questioning the conceptual and practical existence of 'legacy' (Griffiths and Armour, 2013) or assessing the evidence for the ethereal link between such events and sports participation (Coalter, 2004; Coalter, 2007; Mahtani, 2013; Weed et al, 2009). Fewer studies have prioritised the voices, experiences and understanding of the everyday and local families that so much policy is intent on targeting. This article openly prioritises such perspectives, embracing the view of Girginov and Hills (2008; 2009) who argue that sustainable sports development, "places local actors centre stage, as any meaningful vision of change in individuals, communities and organisations produced by sport has to be derived from local

symbols, knowledge and behaviours”. In unpacking what they refer to as the ‘sports participation puzzle’ Girginov and Hills (2008) draw attention to the wider regional impact promised beyond London, within all groups in society.

As Girginov and Hills (2008) highlight, only through building a deeper insight to communities where sports development happens can we address sports development challenges more closely. It also parallels Griffiths and Armour’s (2013) suggestion that there is a need for more critical and analytical insights into legacy pledges. Far fewer qualitative studies have centred on London 2012 legacy, those that have been undertaken have tended to be focused on the media (Griggs et al, 2013) or wider sociological representations and narratives of the Games (Silk, 2012).

Exceptions to the general trend towards quantitative causality and measurement focused research studies include McGillivray and McPherson (2012) who examined the impact of the 2012 cultural legacy programme in Scotland. Here, they suggest that “localised initiatives work within the parameters of existing meaning for local people” (2012; 135). In addition, they used the useful contrast between the need to frame provision and new foundations for community empowerment and social change and the issue of shrinking support available for local people once the main event has moved on. In a similar vein to Davies (2013) and Spracklen (2013), McGillivray and McPherson (2012) argue for closer examination of the unintended policy outcomes of such programmes. In the case of the cultural legacy programme impact McGillivray and McPherson (2012) use qualitative depth interviews and participant observation to record the narratives and micro level understanding to illustrate what they highlight as a ‘legitimacy deficit’. In the case of sport such a deficit is the gap

between those professing benefits (Government, policy makers and corporate sponsors) and the 'recipients' (local communities, clubs, families and individual children and adults).

Other authors have become increasingly critical of the managerialist discourse of legacy that has fetishised supposed magical claims around legacy which favours the policy maker and political stakeholder (MacAloon, 2010). With regards to Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) local communities in the East End of London Hylton and Morpeth (2012) have similarly argued policy makers have been unreceptive to their everyday, local views. Furthermore, they argue for the need to "bring to prominence the relationships between the micro-details of the physical locality, accumulated histories and the importance of the day-to-day experiences of sport for these communities" (2012; 392).

Following on from these appeals for a different research agenda in legacy research few authors have drawn upon visual qualitative methodologies to help examine experiences and such local realities. An exception to this is the study by Kennelly and Watt (2012) that aimed to shift the lens through which the Olympics is examined by using photo-elicitation methods for local youth populations in East London. Although not beyond the physical locality of London the study does allow us to gain insights into the voices and perspectives of local marginalised youth rather than imposing representations onto them. In terms of research findings the unplanned outcomes of the London 2012 Games for these young people and their families included the boom in increasing prices and locations for fast food outlets, existing status quo in neighbourhood regeneration and the emergence of new places for the 'rich' that had little to do with their lives. The study did not look specifically at sports participation, but what was interesting was the lack of resonance such physical activity and sport discourse had

for them locally. They argue in their study that “a new city, beautiful to look at was being built, but that city was far from the local resident’s reality” (2012; 160).

Boardley (2013) has established a mapping of the conceptual landscape that may underpin the link between media consumption of the Olympics with behaviour change in sports participation. In his critique of various socio-psychological approaches he establishes a range of theoretical frameworks and associated concepts that may be drawn upon to help unpick the supposed link. In particular he highlights the Prochaska et al (1992) trans-theoretical model as one of possible utility given the five phased levels of engagement in sports participation from pre-contemplation through to active sustained longer term participation. Equally, it is also suggested that self-esteem-based models that address perceived competence may also be relevant. Specific interest is associated here with how potential participants may actually gain a more negative perception of themselves through consuming elite sport events through the media due to the perceived gap in competence. The foci of many of these psychological frameworks are motivation, beliefs and norms and how these may influence behaviour. Boardley (2013) also usefully draws attention to the case of the London Marathon which covers non-elite as well as elite coverage and appears to have had more impact on behaviour change in running and in demand to enter the event itself. Thus, questions remain as to whether the national media coverage of London 2012 was able to include community level events could provide the necessary relevance for the families and individuals consuming the event.

Other theoretical attempts to examine the link between mass participation have been aligned with the ‘demonstration effect’ (Hindson et al, 1994; Hogan and Norton, 2000, Weed, 2009).

Here, Griffiths and Armour (2013) urge further critical examination of this supposed effect in the case of young people and children. This study in part will add further detailed exploration of the little understood multiple processes that combine to shape the factors that may or may not deliver change in sport and physical activity behaviour. Veal (2012) and Coalter (2004) refer to the similar process as the ‘trickledown effect’ questioning its existence at all by embedding their arguments within the past zero effect of mega sports events to shape participation. Or, as Griffiths and Armour (2013: 12) state “what the available evidence makes clear is that expecting an increase in sports participation as a direct consequence of mega sports events is problematic and possibly naive”. It is fundamental that this policy mantra underpins much of both elite and mass participation funding in what has been termed a ‘virtuous cycle’ (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). Here, the ‘virtuous cycle’ of such policy and the associated programmes that emanate from national strategy and legacy rhetoric argue that an increasing funding pot for elite athletes should lead to more participation, and hence more medals and success which in turn will automatically lead to the generation of inspiring more participation. Bullough (2012) in his assessment of the ability to deliver such latent demand for sports participation through London 2012 crucially argues that a range of more locally determined approaches are needed to deliver such potential legacies. In parallel, Boardley (2013) highlights the need for local sporting environments to be in an optimal position to receive participants so they can nurture lapsed and new participants.

Other authors argue that there is a greater need to recognise what they refer to as the ‘softer’, social legacies of the Games (Davies, 2013). Such legacies that focus on social outcomes are also increasingly difficult to ‘measure’ and quantify. Indeed it is in recognising alternative, plural forms of evidence as argued by Lambert (2013) that such ‘softer’ qualitative data and the perspectives of policy recipients can help offer challenges to the orthodoxy of national

rhetoric. Early attempts to map the impact of the Games have focused on quantitative assessment of young people's changes in school participation (Smith Institute, 2013) and quantifying responses from sports clubs as to whether clubs have experienced a change in membership (SARA, 2013). Most recently a Cabinet Office report (2013) entitled *Inspired by 2012* has outlined the unquestioned positive impact that the Games has had across all sectors of society. Indeed even before the Games had taken place numerous hypothetical studies were undertaken to estimate likely impact as commissioned by various stakeholders (ARUP, 2002; Blake; 2005; DCMS, 2005). It is equally important to prioritise the multiple voices of the 'policy user' (Lambert, 2013) as a counterbalance to such a focus on causality and positivist methodologies. Davies (2013) compliments this perspective by recognising the relevance of qualitative research in capturing the intangible, unplanned and potential negative social aspects associated with mega events sports policy.

Families and sports participation drivers

Early studies of the family and sport examined the transmission of values through sports participation (Kenyon and McPherson, 1974; Oliver, 1980). Research by Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) in the UK established the key role wider leisure plays in developing family relationships throughout the lifecycle. However, since this time there has been a considerable expansion of the growing field of socio-cultural and socio-psychological studies examining the family in influencing and shaping sports participation. This said there is very limited research that has examined the cross over between family dynamics, sports mega events and the lived experiences and understanding of London 2012. Veal suggests, "in order to leverage sporting events to achieve a sport participation legacy, it is necessary to know what levers to pull" (2012; 176). The 'levers' that Veal points towards are yet to be clearly identified in the

specific context of the family and mega sporting events. Especially when family support is identified as a key predictor of sports club membership, recognising that such support encompassed travel, praise, watching, playing and encouragement (Eime, 2013).

Davidson and Power's (2007) research is the only empirical study that has specifically examined perceptions of families preceding the London 2012 Games. This study looked at 100 families in the East End of London and 100 in the County of Yorkshire as a longitudinal study of family life between 1998 and 2006. The questions pertaining to London 2012 influence on families and their understandings of it gathered through face-to-face interviews were only in the first year after the announcement of the initial bid success. Results from this were hypothetical with 60% of London families and only 39.5% of Yorkshire families identifying that the Games would have a positive effect. Nearly 40% of respondents from the north saw local provision as the key barrier to influence including spaces for play and local facility infrastructure. Further findings linked to the narrative of 'inspiring a generation' from the original bid were the difficulties parents faced in being sporting role models and simply not having the opportunity to participate in sport themselves. This is reflected in Davidson and Power's (2007) finding that 51.2% of those respondents in the Northern England sample said the Olympics would have no influence on sport in their family. One respondent interviewed pre-Olympics suggested,

"I hope [the Olympics] will, but I don't think it will, I hope it encourages the schools to be more involved in sports, but, it is wishful thinking, I feel"

(Amanda, mother, Northern City, cited in Davidson and Power, 2007; 27).

In contrast to this response an East End mother stated,

“[My sons] used to do gymnastics and now they’re both now talking about going back to the gym [laughs!]...Because it’s in the East End of London, it’s in their home town...Since we got the bid, I’ve found a lot more children are now becoming more involved in sport”

(Nora, mother, East End of London, cited in Davidson and Power, 2007; 29)

This contrast between geographical proximity to the main London 2012 site will be explored in more detail in the findings section of the paper. However, it does start to give a voice to some of the counter narratives that other researchers have called for (Girginov and Hills, 2008; Kennelly and Watt, 2012; Morpeth and Hylton, 2012).

Studies by Kraaykamp, Oldenkamp and Breedveld (2012) and Wheeler (2012) suggest that a general ‘sports climate’ within a family fosters sports participation. The picture of the ubiquitous ‘family’ per se is problematised by the multi-layered factors that influence sports uptake and enjoyment (Kay, 2009; Green, 2010; Kay, 2011; Sport England, 2002; Wheeler, 2012). Gender, social class and other structural influences also contribute towards the overall propensity to inculcate sports participation (Sport England, 2002). An examination of one and two parent family structure backgrounds established that they can have a substantial socialisation influence on sports participation (Quarmby et al, 2010). This study also found this relationship is reciprocal in nature with lone parents often trading their own leisure and sports involvement to maintain that of their children. These findings were paralleled in an earlier study by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) that solely focused on the lifestyles and sports activity of single parents. Individuals in families with a caring role have also been highlighted as experiencing increased pressure on their own sports choices (Rusedski et al, 2011).

Family relationships are not necessarily always a positive influence. In a study by Sanchez-Miguel et al (2013) swimming participation by young people was examined where parents were identified as ‘controlling’ and asserting high levels of negative verbal ‘encouragement’ that detrimentally shaped their sporting environment. Wheeler (2012) identified a range of fathering approaches and associated attitudes towards initiating young people into sports clubs with a multiplicity of such practices within her sample of eight families. She also recognised the close influence of gender interwoven into such influences with father as coach and mother as ‘taxi driver’ in several cases. In conclusion she found that of most significance to policy makers with the goal of increasing sports participation was that those individuals and parents with a pre-disposition to such ‘messages’ are most likely to be receptive.

Eime et al (2013) in a rare empirical examination of the direct influence of family on sports development policy and practice considered the sports development link in Australian families between supporting the progression into sports clubs from initial interest at school. Her work links with that of Wheeler (2012) in recognising the key process of ‘sampling’ that a parent shapes where they support and role model themselves for young people. This relationship and associated processes are also perhaps at the core of why families may shape their behaviour around London 2012 Games when seeking out new opportunities to participate. It is also in the existing non-participant, or, what Bullough (2012) refers to as lapsed participant that greatest scope for health and social impacts lie.

This review of the existing literature in this field has illustrated that there is a need to move beyond the simplistic questioning of the link between mega events and increased levels of sports participation. What is pertinent is the necessity to consider the family unit, family relationships and culture within and around parent-child dialogue more closely in the context of sports participation legacy stemming from the supposed 'virtuous cycle' of events such as London 2012 Games. Another emergent theme from within this review is that alternative narratives need to be interrogated, emboldened and exposed so that they can offer alternative insights into the challenges of those experiencing the lived realities of such mega events in their own local communities.

Research methodology

This study is undertaken from an interpretivistic position (Crotty, 1998; Palmer, 2013) linked to the voices of local people and families in particular. Fischer (2003) encourages the framing of such interpretivistic policy analysis from perspective of the policy 'user', participant or recipient. Furthermore, as Yanow (2000; 6) has discussed interpretive policy analysis shifts its attention towards expressions of social meanings away from instrumental behaviour. In this case this means the prioritising of values, beliefs and feelings of the families in this project to begin to establish the motives, meanings and purposes that lie behind their actions and views related to the London 2012 Games. The benefits of adopting this perspective lie in gaining crucial insights into everyday life which can allow the researcher and policy analyst to access potentially conflicting behaviours, different expectations and understandings of social situations being examined.

The project recruited five families in total from across four different local government authorities in the East Midlands of England. An overview of the demographic breakdown of the families that undertook the project is contained in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2 INSERT

The project drew upon sensitizing concepts and themes from the literature review to inform the data collection and analysis. Research ethics was undertaken through the university ethics committee and included all families and children engaged in the process ensuring anonymity, giving informed consent and the possibility to leave the project at any time. One family chose to leave the project midway through data collection. The methods used to address the central research questions were in-depth interviews and participant video diaries. Families were recruited through a self selected sample through local media recruitment on radio, university internet pages and print media. Given the time intensive nature of the project commitment some challenges were experienced in recruitment that meant a sustained campaign to recruit five families was undertaken. Family interviews were undertaken in the month preceding the London 2012 Games and in the month after the Games. Video diaries were maintained throughout the two week duration of the event.

Each family recruited to take part in the research was supplied with a digital video recorder to be located in their home for the duration of the Games. Participants were asked to keep a video diary that reflected their consumption and interpretation of the 2012 Olympic Games as well as their participation habits, attitudes and local understandings. They were given the necessary instruction on camera use and maintenance by members of the research team. The central aim of the video diary was to ascertain whether young people and their families

change their sports participation and attitudes to sports participation due to the presence of 2012 Games.

This method sought to address the challenges faced in making research interesting and appealing so as to foster young people and their families' engagement within the research process. In contemporary mediated society, new digital technologies, such as smart phones with video cameras, are increasingly meaningful to young people. They 'are arguably influenced by the genre of sports 'reality TV' and a steady stream of popular cultural forms in which self-presentation, self-representation, self-reflection and performativity are powerful cultural symbols in highly visible and visualised ways' (Cherrington and Watson, 2010; 172). This method creates new opportunities for encouraging young research subjects and their families to participate collaboratively in the research process. By utilising visual phenomena that are present in their everyday lives, we sought to understand how they interpret representation of the Olympic Games and the impact on their sports participation.

All video diaries and interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded thematically (Gomm, 1998) by the research team for emergent categories of interest. The data sets were separated as transcribed texts, with analysis undertaken within interview transcripts (pre and post London 2012 Olympics) and then across the video transcripts produced. As suggested by Silverman (2006) the codes and associated quotes were then grouped together and broader categorical themes identified. Through this analytical process refinement of codes also occurred so that some were discarded, and other spheres of interest examined more closely in the video and interview data sets as they became more prevalent in explaining and understanding these social phenomenon. Furthermore the visual diary monologues were also

returned to after transcript analysis to capture key visual moments identified in the data where necessary. Data analysis was also undertaken across the team, utilising multiple researcher perspectives on the same rich data set to establish common (and different) lines of enquiry for the development of denser bodies of codes. Equally, this process also allowed for discussion with regards to what data, findings and codes to include and exclude. Negative cases that contradicted and provided paradoxical points of reference from the earlier literature review were also highlighted at this stage.

In this sense whilst the methodological approach of empowering participants to effectively collect their own video data there is still a process of *excluding* elements of video extracts (and transcripts) from the final results. Long and Carless (2013) call upon researchers to reflect upon which voices they privilege and prioritise to ensure that less strident voices are not silenced. Telling the stories of these families through video as their (albeit partially incomplete) ‘stories’ is one way that such hidden voices can be brought to the fore (Cherrington and Watson, 2010; Smith and Sparkes, 2008). This is not to ignore that the very nature of prioritising research findings and the limitations of dissemination outlets is by its essence a process that will exclude elements of the stories and diary extracts of the families in this project.

Potential limitations of this methodology are the extensive, at times unstructured responses received through video methodology and how to make sense and prioritise such data. But, equally it is through some of this novel, less researcher-driven approach that the richer, more nuanced insights into the sports development ‘legacy’ can be gained. Results emerged through an iterative process of code refinement (Silverman, 2006) with the stronger themes

identified and presented within this paper as those pertaining to the main research questions of the study and the sensitizing themes from the original literature review. Data that sat outside the sphere of the project was gradually filtered, but may also form the basis for future wider follow up studies, dissemination and potential publication.

FINDINGS

Socialisation within and through the family

A key theme that emerged from the data was the significance of past socialisation into sport, or negative family historical experiences by parents when they were children. This family socialisation process is important in not detaching the current lived experiences of the Olympics from deeper histories and shared perceptions family members have. One mother stated,

We're trying to guide him more towards sport as I wasn't when I was a kid"...no I wasn't encouraged into sport, my parents weren't really sporty, "family member two"(her husband) is really sporty, and was encouraged into sport, whereas I wasn't as a kid.

Mother, Family 1, pre-2012 Olympics interview.

The past negative experiences of parents and how they may shape existing propensity to engage with different sport and physical activity choices for their own children can be seen in the following comment from another mother,

I remember when I was at school, ...you get forced to wear tiny little P.E knickers and things and it's not right you know! ...I think they ought to take that into consideration and maybe do different lessons for girls, or say we've got things like maybe Zumba or Yoga, that kind of activity, where it's not competitive and you don't have to be first or last or anything like that you know, it's just all inclusive but you know... active!

Mother, family 2, pre-2012 interview.

Another layer of socialisation that may have shaped interest in developing legacy through inculcating sports participation in the children within families can be seen in the following quotes by a father's references to his son's interest (or not) in sport,

obviously it's nice to see it, it's nice to do more things with him because he's interested in sport so the fact that he's getting into cycling and swimming, it's just erm ... well it's nice now he's getting into it, it's exciting for me because he's more, he's now starting to come to my way of thinking.

Father, family 1, pre-2012.

I mean "Family member three" (his son) isn't necessarily....(pauses) I mean, when you have a little one you automatically say "oh he's going to be into sport" I'm one of four!.... I mean my dad's an ex-sportsman for Warwickshire cricket, played rugby for

Coventry and really a top level sportsman, so he wanted his kids to play sport and he was over the moon with me.

Father, family 1, pre-2012.

The link between socialisation as children into how they may then shape, persuade and have opinions on London 2012 and its relevance to their children can be seen in the following comments from the mother in the same family interviewed prior to London 2012 commencing,

Yeah, absolutely and I think because I wasn't brought up encouraged to do sport and I didn't do sport, you know it's good to see it [Olympics 2012], sometimes you don't have so much of a focus.

Mother, family 1, pre-2012.

Another mother supports this statement by suggesting,

Since I was at school really I never really enjoyed physical activity, I was always the kid at the back of, you know, the cross country line, I was quite good at throwing things, I was good at javelin and discuss, that sort of stuff so I dint mind doing that, but I never really had the motivation to get myself going when I was at school, and that just carried on when I was older as well I never really wanted to take part in any sporting activities.

Mother, Family 2, pre-2012 interview.

As Kay (2009) has argued in relation to fathering through sport, wider socialisation within and around the family is fundamental as a consideration when designing programmes and initiatives that may aim to harness the supposed power of sport to develop legacy. This more complex context of parental motivation and interest in different aspects of sport and physical activity needs to be reflected in the local approach to engaging the ‘non-engaged’ in particular.

Parents as central enabler, catalyst or constraint for a sports participation legacy

Throughout this study of the everyday lived experiences of families before, during and following the London 2012 Games the parent as enabler and potential driver of change to deliver a legacy has been evident. This may be one of the hidden ‘levers’ in legacy change that Veal (2012) has encouraged closer consideration of. As suggested by one parent,

Have we seen any [change], do we feel healthier? Well no, watching a load of athletes definitely does not make me feel any healthier! I think I’ve realised that it is highly unlikely that I will ever be an Olympian!...The Olympics hasn’t really changed their lives [his children] too much, to be brutally honest it hasn’t really grabbed hold of them I think it might do in time but I think it’s more going to be driven by us rather than by them.

Father, family 5, video extract.

The following conversation between family members shows this dynamic that lies at the core of generating change in participation,

Daughter 1: He's been encouraging me to do more sport!

Interviewer One: Who "family member two (Father) has"? ok...

Daughter 1: ...and I've failed horribly!

Mother: We can't force you to do it!

Father: I've tried, I've made lots of suggestions but, I mean I'll take you there, I'll show you and I'll help you...

Mother: We'd have to physically put trainers on your feet and push you up the road!

Father: She has to want to do it for herself and I think that's the biggest problem with teenagers! The motivation there for them to do it...

Mother: It's the motivation and the social aspect as well... I mean if they get seen by their mates, they'll get slated for it really!

Interviewer Two: Stigma?

Mother: Yeah and it's such a shame!

Father: It's... the problem is, is it's different times change and they have changed when I was 14 it wasn't a problem! You could run down the road, it's fine!

Family 2, Olympics video conversation.

In particular, this shows the link with what Wheeler (2012) refers to as ‘sampling’ where parents provide the opportunity for their children to engage in different activities. Again, this could also be shaped by parent’s own socialised experiences as children within their own families in generating a prioritisation of sport as a potential social activity. Therefore, the mass exposure to London 2012 is mediated through this prior experience and propensity to engage in sampling new sporting activities. This begins to also illustrate the complexity and variable nature of the supposed link between mega events and sporting mass participation. A theme in responses that matches past research (e.g. Quarmby et al 2010; Dionigi et al 2012) is that of parental trade off in their own participation to facilitate the leisure choices of their children. Here, one father stated,

I was supposed to be training for the triathlon but unfortunately I haven’t in all fairness I have been quite poorly so... but we need, I need to get onto that, worked quite a bit with the kids yesterday and their cycling so that was my exercise yesterday.

Father, family 1, video extract.

In the same family, the mother states in a post 2012 interview reflection,

I don’t know the kids are so little, so we have to put a hold on things, but that was going to be there anyway really!

Mother, family 1, post 2012 interview.

Another mother illustrates such compromises by voicing her own trade-off,

Mother: No, I know I should do, I'm a dietician so I should know about physical activity but I still feel the same I still feel that time is just something... something I haven't got and I still think that until my children are older I'm not going to find that time! So it's just circumstances, it's just the way I am in my life at the moment...

What these conversations of parent voice illustrate is the challenge for sports development and physical activity promotion to not ignore the likely uptake prioritisation by parents of their children over themselves due to time and commitment pressure within family relationships. In addition, the parent needs to be more centrally located within the programme design considerations for sports development. If parents are to inculcate interest and access to sporting programmes their needs must be prioritised more suitably.

Lessons for sports development practice and programme design

This project has refocused on the centrality of local actors within the 'sports development puzzle' (Girginov and Hills, 2008) in critically analysing impact and experiences of London 2012. It builds upon the perspective of Shinke et al (2010; 164) who argue that "through an appreciation of family resources, and how these might work collaboratively, sport and physical activity staff can appreciate the potential challenges encountered". As a result of exploring family relationships and dynamics several rich observations have been gained into local considerations for sports development practice and programme design. The recognition of the limited research into the role of the parent in school-club links has been emphasised in the existing literature (Eime et al, 2013). This is a fundamental paradox when the process of supporting transition between school experiences into community is such a core component

of the sports development process (Bloyce and Smith, 2010; Collins, 2012; Eime et al, 2013).

Parents often offered their own ‘voice’ on this, for example,

I’ve been to the sports days and yes they’re fun but there not encouraging activity I don’t think I mean there’s no flow from what they do at sports to pushing them into clubs and stuff like that so I don’t think their desire to recognise it and I don’t think there’s a desire to push kids into sport it’s up to the parents and it’s not up to the teachers to recognise it but there should be that element of encouraging it...

Father, family 1, post-2012 interview.

A similar point can also be seen in the following conversation,

Mother: I think it’s great in these summer holidays they do fifty pence cost to go canoeing but then it seems that that’s it! You can have a go but then there’s nothing there to take it on, we booked “family member four” [son] on six weeks of canoeing and you do the same thing every week there’s no progression!

Father: Did it not sign post you to where to go to do canoeing?

Mother: No...you hit a brick wall the doors shut so there needs to be a lot more joined up thinking and how do we get these kids moving on, rather than being a summer activity for six weeks to keep the kids occupied...

Conversation between mother and father, family 5, post-2012 interview.

School to community club links are a central component of the government delivering its legacy and wider sport and physical activity sports participation goals (DCMS, 2012).

However, it appears that for local actors engaged with legacy in this region they saw key limitations with the existing processes in place. A further observation shared by most families in the research was the lack of increased local opportunities they had gained access to over the duration of this research project. Those that were in place often did not ‘fit’ with their needs as parents and generated a further barrier to involvement. One mother expressed concern over an incident she recalled,

And then there was a local thing that a local hockey team did, they were doing family and hockey and “family member three” [son] was quite interested but he wasn’t too keen about going on his own but then when I rang up they weren’t mixing the families you sort of had to do it separately...They sound like good ideas but then they kind of were a barrier.

Mother, family 1, post 2012 interview.

If parents are central enablers of participation, and family culture itself is core to having a propensity to be involved in sport and physical activity then such local communities must be more involved in policy and programme design.

Barriers against sport engagement within the family setting

Barriers against sport participation in the current climate of UK recession were a prominent theme within video diaries and interviews undertaken. The mega event spectacle and the mythical narratives they generate must be held accountable through giving space to the alternative voices of local communities. As Morpeth and Hytton (2012) have argued it is policy makers and corporate decision makers who produce such seductive narratives. Yet

participants in this research co-exist as a counterbalance against the hegemonic legacy vision, as one mother illustrates in relation to child care,

There is nowhere for the children to go that doesn't cost money! Occasionally there would be free places so that you could,... so they seem to have the great idea where they're yeah we want to get people active, but if they've not got a crèche or a place that the children can go you can't access that anyway! So that's probably one of the reasons that in my head until they are old enough to be left at home without supervision I'm probably not going to go and do my own things!

Mother, family 5, pre-2012 interview.

The limitations of delivering a sport participation legacy through London 2012 due to financial constraints on families were repeatedly expressed throughout the project. Again, the realities of financing a local increase in sporting activities for parents and children during the current UK recession was another strong counter balance to the mainstream 'mythical boost' in participation identified by Coalter (2004, 2007). The quotes below also add important local critical context to the assumed legacy Griffiths and Armour (2013) have urged researchers to re-examine,

If you want to deal with all the obesity stuff you have to... I mean we are not poor but we would still have to think twice about what we are not doing to let them have the chance, so they have the chance to do X, Y and Z.

Father, family 5, post-2012 interview.

Financial factors were also located in direct reference to the austerity measures of government and dismantled Free Swimming programme (Devine, 2013),

Mother: Well if it's for me personally as a mum with children wanting to do it it's the finances really! ...Yeah definitely, definitely. Because it does make things... like the free swim they were giving here and then they pulled that away! Now they only do it in holidays they don't do it all year round!

Mother, Family 3, video diary extract.

Another indicated,

I think it's finding things that don't cost a fortune as well because the boys do quite a few things but everything costs! So as a choice for us we would try and do things that don't cost lots of money, if we want to take them swimming it's a cost, if you go to football it's a cost "family member four" [son] goes to boxing... it's a cost and I would rather they get the opportunity to do things and I... we,... don't have the money for us to do it because they're trying it! You know so there is definitely a cost issue!

Mother, family 5, pre-2012 interview.

Because to do any type of sport, which we found out too... it's not cheap! In clubs everywhere there's not much opportunity to err... for people who can't afford to do it, to do it, so I wonder how many kids don't get the chance who could potentially become Olympic athletes, and I think that really going forwards that's something that

someone really needs to look at and open the door for a lot of people that otherwise wouldn't get the chance to take part!

Father, family 5, video diary extract.

This theme gives a clear emphasis to the local financial prioritisation families may make over lifestyle decisions pertaining to sport activity. The challenge for policy makers is how to counter such clear concerns mothers and fathers have expressed and the need to give this concern more critical importance in programme design.

Inspired to be part of a new sports participation legacy?

In returning to the original quote from Singapore by Lord Sebastian Coe in 2005, it was clear that families held mixed experiences and views on the level of inspiration London 2012 had delivered. Clearly, for some families and parents in particular the Games had given a profile and increase in motivation to engage in sport and healthier lifestyle changes. For example, the mother below indicated,

To myself I think it's always good to see top athletes performing and doing well at their sport and you see all of their hard work paying off and it does give you the motivation to want to do better for yourself and you know to make yourself more healthy and to strive you know for some goals and achievements.

Mother, family 2, pre-London 2012 Interview

This message conformed to the policy maker's legacy vision for the Games. At the same time a repeated message from family members was one of inspiring performances and media

coverage and how this does not necessarily directly translate into the currency of behaviour change. The perceived age limits of the inspirational legacy can be seen in the following quote by a mother,

I wouldn't say inspirational for me but I think there were *inspirational* (emphasised) performances... I felt like I have reached an age now where it wouldn't be inspirational for me personally.

Mother, family 5, post 2012 interview.

Equally a 12 year old girl in a different family recognised this similar limitation,

Well I'd say with or without the Olympics I was trying this... my aim this summer was to do a bit more exercise, but it's not really me, that's not my motivation, I've got my own motivation so... it's not... I could still do it without the Olympics!

Youngest daughter, age 11, Family 2, pre-2012 interview.

This theme of inspirational media coverage, but without the assumed behaviour change was also expressed in a post 2012 conversation between husband and wife,

Father: I watched Bradley Wiggins and all of those guys on the track and there was a few things like Jessica Ennis was really good to watch I guess she's quite inspiring in that sense...

Mother: It's inspired you to do what?

Father: It hasn't inspired me to do anything I'm just saying that I was quite inspired!

Post 2012 Olympics video diary, Family 1.

As Boardley (2012) has suggested in relation to delivering participation legacy through exposure to elite sporting media events at London 2012, a key feature of likely ability to create behaviour change stems from how the mass population relates to elite athletes. He has suggested that self-esteem deficit between the public and those elite participants could actually put people off from taking part due to the perceived gap in competence. This is clearly indicated by some responses from families engaged in this study,

They should just be encouraging you to become healthier, not saying that you could train to be in the Olympics because most people, a majority of people will think well I can't do that! But if it was just to do with your lifestyle, like normal people...they don't have all this equipment so... and they've still done it!

Daughter, age 11, Family 2, pre-2012 Olympics.

Boardley (2013) highlights the need to also present local representations of participants and cases of behaviour change in the media to bring about a closing of this perceived gap. This also seems relevant in highlighting what McGillvray and McPherson (2012) term the 'legitimation deficit' between communities and policy makers.

Conclusions

In the scope of this research project the families gave a mixed response to their individual and collective change in behaviour and attitudes through their experiences of London 2012 Games. What seems clear is that there is a multiplicity of experiences, perceptions and responses to legacy and engagement, with behaviour change mediated through the lens of the family. Shifting the lens through which we may view such policies and practices can support the understanding of environments where sports development ‘happens’ which may often be in the hidden spaces of the home, living room and at the school gate. These more liminal spaces and unheard voices can offer a deeper insights into what Armour and Griffiths (2013;11) refer to as the ‘fuzzy or divergent factors’ that can support Veal’s (2012) call to more clearly identify the levers that may trigger genuine participation legacy. The family as a central lever and delivery agent in mass participation legacy remains under examined and policy makers and practitioners in sport development must recognise this limitation.

This adds further weight to existing arguments that it is necessary to promblematise the simplified suggestion that sporting mega events deliver assumed increases in sports participation. It is clear that local sports development practices and policies need to be more family friendly in their design. How sport development interacts with changes in local child care provision, recession driven changes in the home and austerity limitation on participation patterns of parents and their children remain largely under researched. It is also necessary to recognise the existing layers of complexity that socialisation experiences may have had on existing parents when considering approaches to ‘assumed positive connotations’ that sport may have. Herein stands the greatest challenge for the policy maker where families in this project question the existence of genuine legacy, impact through media-led inspiration and the availability of relevant and suitable local opportunities. Such counter narratives to those of government rhetoric and through alternative methodologies such as those employed in this

project can give a deeper focus on the micro scale of policy and practice. Perhaps by recognising ambiguity in current sports development as it is interpreted by families and children we can usefully distance ourselves from the potentially appealing and intuitive myths that surround Olympic legacy. A clear recommendation emerging from this project is the need for government agencies such as Sport England and DCMS to re-prioritise the diversity of family dynamics, structures, settings and contexts as drivers of sport development policy success.

Implications from this project are the need to engage local government, county sports partnerships (CSP), national governing body (NGB) and central government with the importance of the family as both a key delivery agent for change, policy filter and an existing under researched vehicle or lever in delivering legacy from mega events. The complex interactions identified in this research show that further research is required to explore the specific nuances of family interactions with existing NGB and perhaps school based physical activity and sports development programmes. Previous research has been shown to illustrate that research is a challenging area for those working as sports development officers in local practice ‘on the ground’ (Mackintosh, 2012) and further calls to employ more subtle methodologies in new areas may themselves have inherent difficulties in uptake and interest.

Considerable financial and human capital of over £1 billion investment in volunteers, clubs, schools, and sports development programmes is in place until 2017 (DCMS, 2012). But, if we are to truly create a ‘sporting habit for life’ through such events then far more systematic analyses of how families sits alongside policy, programmes and practice are needed. Arguably, the diversity of family needs must be better recognised within the community

sports development policy process. Families, parents and children should be more actively engaged in decision making around policy and programme design at macro and micro levels within sports development CSP, NGB and local government sporting infrastructures. Whether all this is now too late to leverage the London 2012 Olympic vision remains to be seen. What seems clearer is that parents are currently insufficiently acknowledged as central enablers, catalysts and hidden delivery agents in the possibility of a sports participation legacy.

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