Exploring activism type in social justice and disability sport

current status and future prospects of the disability social movement

Inhyang Alice Choi and Brett Smith
## Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quickening period (Before 1988)</th>
<th>Maturing period (1988- mid 1990s)</th>
<th>Diversity period (After late 1990s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The core force</td>
<td>Parents, experts</td>
<td>People with minor disability, experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
<td>People with severe disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The potential core force

“Para-sport”

- High visibility and cultural idolization to highlight social injustice
- Increasing worldwide media coverage of Paralympic Games
- Inevitable relation with disability politics
Athlete activism

a) Using their celebrity to draw attention to social injustice as opportunity for change
   (e.g., athletes advocating for human-right causes based on race and gender)

b) Taking direct action to reform sport itself as the site for social change
   (e.g., speaking out against gender discrimination or homophobia in sport)
Aims

This study is aimed to expand the empirical literature on ‘Para-athlete activism’

1. Categorize activism type
2. Influence on society
3. Commonalities & Differences
Method

Previous research: mixed methods

Activism orientation Scale

Highest or lowest score on previous questionnaire

Current study

Participant

21 disabled people (3 groups)
(11 Para-athlete, 6 non-athletes, and 4 retired athletes who were athlete activist)

Data collection

Semi-structured interview (e.g., Please share your story about engaging in activism)

Data analysis

Narrative analysis with regards to: activism type, consequence of activism, comparison of activism amongst different groups
Athlete activism

Sport-based activism

Social activism

Online activism

Political activism

Scholar activism
1. Sport-based activism

Actions taken by athletes to make positive change or inspiration, and reduce the subordination or exploitation of certain groups within the sport culture

- Elite athlete / Medallist
- Paralympic committee member (e.g., IPC, KPC)
- Talent donation (for public or junior athletes)

I think that being an elite athlete by itself contributes positively to society by participating in international competition and showing good performance.
2. Social activism

Actions or discourses designed to draw attention to social injustice and raise awareness beyond sports and disability issues across society through *diverse social platforms*.

- Interview
- Motivational speech
- Mentoring
- Volunteering
- Donation
- Advertisement / Ambassador

It is not easy for disabled people to leave their house after they acquire a disability. So I *visit them in their house, consult their worries, share my experience, and encourage societal engagement*. 
3. Political activism

Behaviour exhibited in public areas or organizations, for the sake of raising awareness on certain political issues (e.g., a corrupt or unjust system) and promoting legislative change (e.g., law enforcement).

- Protest: Radical/Aggressive -> Peaceful/Conservative (e.g., candlelight protest)
- Discussion with politicians or stakeholders in person
- Policy monitoring
- Civil complaint / Voting / Petition

I had a chance to have responsibility to do policy monitoring for disability. So, I have reported the need to improve convenience facilities and policies from the perspective of disability in media.
4. Scholar activism

Transmission of ideas within **academic environments** (e.g., in universities, training institutes) to enhance a person’s understanding of oppressive systems for achieving a radically fairer world.

- Research
- Lecture / Special lecture
- Forum / Conference
- Publish a paper

I wrote my PhD thesis on the discrimination faced by disabled employees. With regards to this, I am still **doing research**. And I also **give lectures on how to increase awareness on disability for student and public** and giving some advice if someone asks me.
5. Online activism

Advocacy type that uses digital communication (e.g., social media, blog, and podcasts) for social, political, and cultural movement to deliver a particular message to a large or specific audience.

- Social networking (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Blogging

In fact, romantic relation between disabled and non-disabled people is very unusual in media. We blog to increase awareness that, although it might look strange, there is nothing strange. Our blog posts seem to bring some changes in people’s attitude towards disabled people.
### Past vs Now athlete activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Past (retired athletes)</th>
<th>Now (current athletes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social activism</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivational speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholar activism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Donation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advertisement / Ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political activism</td>
<td>Protest (High-risk / Radical)</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion with politicians</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil complaint / Voting</td>
<td>Forum / Conference / Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport-based activism</td>
<td>Medalist</td>
<td>Protest (conventional / Candlelight protest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion with politicians or stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Civil complaint / Voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online activism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elite athletes / Medallist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paralympic committee (e.g., IPC, KPC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Talent donation (for public or junior athletes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Social networking (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, Facebook)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blogging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key takeaways

▪ Para-sport can lead effective strategies and action for social justice outcome

▪ Expanded diverse activism type from primary means of athlete’s activism

▪ Insights to future research on disability studies, social movement, and athlete activism

▪ Possible directions for potential athlete activists and for athletes’ career transition

▪ A platform to inspire activism ideas amongst activists (e.g., Para-athlete activists, non-athlete activists)
Thank you!

Brett Smith

Damian Haslett

Contact details
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Inhyang_Choi
@Inhyangchoi