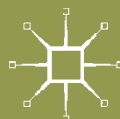


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THE PALGRAVE HANDBOOK OF PARALYMPIC STUDIES

Edited by
Ian Brittain and Aaron Beacom



The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies

Ian Brittain • Aaron Beacom
Editors

The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies

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1

Introduction

Ian Brittain and Aaron Beacom

The expansion of the international sports infrastructure forms part of the social history of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This expansion has been linked by a succession of authors to a series of technological revolutions in transport, communications and industrial production, as well as attendant social and political changes (Guttmann 1978; Mandell 1984; Wavlin 1984; Holt 1989; Allison 1993; Maguire 1999; Jarvie 2012). Notwithstanding arguments concerning structure and agency, and the impact of contrasting cultural contexts, shifts in our interpretation of social phenomena, such as gender, race and ethnicity, have, for example, been articulated through the changing configuration of global sport (Cashmore 2000; Malcolm 2012; Adair 2013; Pfister and Sisjord 2013). More recently, enhanced awareness of disability rights and increased prominence of disability in the public policy sphere have been linked by writers and commentators to the expansion of disability sport (Brittain 2004; LaVaque-Manty 2005; Howe 2008; Bundon and Clark 2014; Active Policy Solutions n.d.; Laureus n.d.). The most prominent elements of this expanded infrastructure—the International Paralympic Committee with its attendant governance and development organisations, National Paralympic Committees, emerging parasport federations and organising committees for regional and international competitions including the

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Paralympic Games—constitute what has come to be known as the Paralympic Movement. It is the development of this movement, borne as it was, out of inter-organisational tensions and rivalries that provide the focus for this Handbook.

Disability sports generally and parasports more specifically are a very recent phenomenon—so recent indeed that as explored in the Handbook, the institutional trappings of national and international federations have yet to be established in the context of a number of parasports. The first Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948 (widely associated with the emergence of the Paralympic Movement), took place 69 years ago and so the early Stoke Mandeville Games and the first Paralympic Games (1960) are still within the lifetime of some. A number of athletes who participated in the early Paralympic Games are still alive today (e.g. Margaret Maughan from Great Britain who won Britain's first ever Paralympic gold medal in Rome in 1960 and was given the honour of lighting the cauldron at the London 2012 Paralympic Games opening ceremony). At the same time, the growth in breadth and depth of what became known as the Paralympic Games was very rapid. With 328 athletes from 21 countries competing across nine sports in 1960 (Brittain 2014), this has increased to 4328 athletes from 157 countries competing across 22 sports in 2016 (IPC Website 2017). Yet despite this sharp upward trajectory and a corresponding expansion of public interest in the Games, there was, until recently, a surprising scholarly vacuum surrounding the topic. Since the start of the twenty-first century, this began to change. The sharpening of international interest in disability rights reflected for example in negotiations leading to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), the increasing (albeit unevenly distributed globally) resourcing of disability sport and the expansion of academic programmes associated with the study of sport, have all contributed to a marked increase in research and publications associated with disability sport and the Paralympic Games (DePauw and Gavron 1995; Bailey 2008; Howe 2008; Thomas and Smith 2008; Legg and Gilbert 2011; Schantz and Gilbert 2012; Brittain 2016). Research and development in adaptive training techniques and prosthetics associated with enhanced performance of Paralympic athletes contributed to a further increase in scholarly outputs (Swartz and Watermeyer 2008; Zettler 2009; Burkett 2010). Notwithstanding the rapid increase of published material, while chapters on disability sport and the Paralympic Games have appeared in a number of sports studies Handbooks, to date there has not been a Handbook devoted solely to the study of Paralympic sport and the development of the Paralympic Movement. This Handbook is an attempt to address this deficit.

It is perhaps inevitable that the terms of reference for the development of the Paralympic Movement can be found in the 'parallel' narrative of the Olympic Movement. The modern Olympic Games were conceived in the twilight of the nineteenth century after a long period of gestation (MacAloon 2007). The organisation of the Games reflected in large part, the social and political mores of the era. Initially dominated by white males from Western Europe and North America, drawn from a particular socio-economic class, its expansion over time began to reflect changing social attitudes and the shifting global balance of power. In contrast to the Paralympic Movement, the development of the Olympic Movement has long been the basis of a significant and expanding body of literature (partly generated through the various Olympic Studies Centres globally) from many disciplinary perspectives (e.g. Espy 1979; Kanin 1981; Hazan 1982; Hoberman 1986; Guttman 1992; Hill 1996; Kaplanidou and Karadakis 2010; Beacom 2012; Jefferson Lenskji and Wagg 2012; Girginov 2013; IOC 2015). From a socio-political perspective, this has included a debate regarding the potential of the Olympic Movement to have a measure of agency, influencing wider social and political development (Kidd 2008; Spaaij 2012). Certainly at the time of initiation, the Movement was primarily an educational one (Müller 2000). This has remained an important element of its work, reflected in the growth of Olympic Education initiatives. Lately, the Movement has become increasingly engaged with international development and more specifically, the so-called sport for development and peace (SDP) agenda. While it would be over-simplistic to present the development of the much younger Paralympic Movement as following the same trajectory, there are similar characteristics and the Handbook addresses these in some detail. In this respect, it can be considered as a companion resource to the Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies (Jefferson Lenskji and Wagg 2012).

This Handbook is particularly timely given the experiences of the Rio Games of 2016 and preparations for the 2018 Winter Games in PyeongChang and 2020 Summer Games in Tokyo, all of which are taking place outside the European—North American axis traditionally associated with the Olympic Movement. While all Olympic and Paralympic Games are characterised by pressures peculiar to their historical and geo-political setting, in recent years, tensions have been mounting on a number of fronts. The bidding process for Olympic and Paralympic Games has, in recent years, been on a downward trajectory in terms of the number of bidding cities as municipal authorities, as well as a range of other key national and regional stakeholders, look increasingly critically at the balance between costs and benefits associated with hosting (Beacom 2012). At the same time, the experience of the Rio Games

exhibited particular organisational, resourcing and ethical tensions that present a new set of challenges for the management of the relationship between the IOC and the IPC.

1.1 The Organisation of This Book

A key element of any good Handbook is a combination of depth and breadth of subject area coverage. The Handbook set out to achieve this through engaging with a broad and internationally diverse range of authors from a range of backgrounds. It incorporates chapters written or co-written by practitioners from within the Paralympic Movement and so provides at times unique insights into key issues and concerns raised from both a practical and an academic perspective. The Handbook, divided into six sections, provides a critical assessment of contemporary issues that define the contours of the Paralympic Movement generally and the Paralympic Games more specifically.

Section one of the book explores a range of issues concerning the conceptualising of disability sport. In the second chapter, **Brett Smith** and **Andrea Bundon** set the scene by enabling readers to gain a greater understanding of what it means to be ‘disabled’. This, they consider as critical to an understanding of how decisions are reached on the organisation, governance and development of Paralympic sport. Their approach is to explore disability as it is presented through a series of contending ‘models’, in particular, the medical, social, social relational and human rights models of disability. **Anjali Forber Pratt** then expands on a consideration of conceptual issues by exploring relationships between disability and gender, race, sexuality, class and religious beliefs in the context of Paralympic sport. It is noteworthy that these areas are only recently emerging as part of disability sport discourses, yet are central to continuing challenges associated with access to sport development opportunities by groups who have historically experienced marginalisation. Building upon the first two chapters, **Hayley Fitzgerald** then examines how the issues of disability and stigma can lead to both attitudinal and structural barriers to inclusion, both in sport and within society itself, and how barriers to sports participation are inextricably linked to wider societal views and expectations of people with impairments. This is followed by **Danielle Peers**, who critiques the claim that the Paralympic Movement is widely constructed as part of the global movement for empowering people with disabilities by offering an historical overview of the relationships amongst disability and deaf movements, disability sports movements and the Paralympic Movement—across a

range of global contexts—from the late nineteenth century until contemporary times. Section one concludes with a chapter by **Liam French** and **Jill Le Clair**, who focus on the ways in which broadcast media frame Paralympic sport and the extent to which new and emerging social media technologies and platforms potentially offer new modes of consumption and ways of engaging with disability sport that challenge traditional dominant mainstream mass media representations, many of which are underpinned by the negative views of disability outlined in the preceding chapters.

Section two considers the developing structure of the Paralympic Movement. In order to better understand how the Paralympic Movement has developed, it begins with **Ian Brittain** highlighting some of the key points in the history and development of the Paralympic Games from their early beginnings as a rehabilitation and awareness-raising event as the Stoke Mandeville Games to their establishment as the second-largest multi-sport event globally after the Olympic Games. This is followed by an explanation by **David Legg** of the evolving relationship of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) with the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). He considers how the IOC has influenced the development of the IPC, the governance of the Paralympic Games and associated debates including regulations concerning participation of athletes with disability in the Olympic Games. **Mary Hums** and **Josh Pate** then explore more specifically the governance structure of the IPC including its management of parasports and maintenance of relationships with the IOC and various sport governing bodies that work with sports for people with disabilities, but are not represented at the Paralympic Games. **Laura Misener** and **Kristina Molloy** then address the philosophical debate about an inclusive society in relation to the organisation of an event that aims to build accessible sport facilities, develop sport pathways and influence societal understandings of disability. This is explored primarily through their involvement with, and critical appreciation of, the Vancouver 2010 winter Paralympic Games. **Simon Darcy** concludes this section by highlighting the fact that since its inception, the Paralympic Movement has been constrained by a series of inherent weaknesses and examining how structural issues such as the underrepresentation of some countries, gender bias and a split between the resource-rich and resource-poor regions contribute towards these weaknesses.

Section three considers the Paralympic Games from a political and strategic perspective. **Mathew Dowling**, **David Legg** and **Phil Brown** introduce the reader to discussions surrounding cross-comparative sport policy literature and begin to reflect upon how comparative sport policy research might be informed by, and applied to, the Paralympic sporting context. In doing so, the

chapter identifies a number of challenges in applying what have historically been non-disabled-centric comparative models to examine the Paralympic sporting domain and the problems that derive from such an approach. **Amy Farkas Karageorgos** and **Colin Higgs** claim that the Paralympic Movement and the United Nations share a similar aspiration of creating a more inclusive and accessible society and set about examining the role that the Paralympic Movement, and more specifically the International Paralympic Committee, have played in advancing the International Development Agenda. Chapter 14 then turns the focus towards an investigation of how China has risen over the last 10 to 15 years to become the most powerful summer Paralympic Games nation by far, which **Ailin Mao** and **Shuhan Sun** attempt to answer through a discussion of possible indicators such as Chinese economic development, legal framework and organisational structure. Sport, politics and sporting boycotts have formed part of the literature of non-disabled international sport for many years, but are rarely discussed in terms of disability sport and the Paralympic Movement. **Ian Brittain** then highlights the fact that even the Paralympic Movement is not immune to international politics and in particular the boycott agenda by outlining the case of South Africa during the Apartheid regime of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. **Aaron Beacom** concludes this section by continuing the theme of sport and politics with a discussion of the evolving engagement of Paralympic Movement actors with international diplomacy in the context of events relating to the London, Sochi and Rio Paralympic Games. He concludes by outlining the possible future trajectory for diplomacy as it relates to various actors within the Paralympic Movement.

Section four focuses down on specific governance challenges facing para-sports as they continue to move through their formative years. **Chloe Slocum**, **Suzy Kim** and **Cheri Blauwet** claim that despite the rapid growth of the Paralympic Movement over the last 30 years, women and athletes with high support needs (AHSN) have remained underrepresented. They claim that both groups of athletes have historically faced distinct barriers to sports participation and underrepresentation at elite levels of competition in Paralympic sport and set about examining why this might be the case. **Mark Connick**, **Emma Beckman** and **Sean Tweedy** state that athlete classification is central to the existence of Paralympic and disability sport as it defines who is eligible to compete and promotes participation by controlling for the impact of impairment on the outcome of competition. The authors explain these claims through a description of some of the key practical issues relating to the development of evidence-based classification systems, such as the levels of evidence and types of research studies that are required. **Jan Burns** then traces the history of the involvement of athletes with intellectual disabilities within

parasport by describing the origins and different purposes of the two main organisations supporting these athletes, the Special Olympics organisation and the International Association for Para-athletes with Intellectual Disabilities (INAS). She also highlights the reasons for the exclusion, and then re-inclusion, of athletes with intellectual disabilities in the Paralympic Games. **Gregor Wolbring** states that one of the most consequential advances in science and technology is the increasing generation of human bodily enhancement products in many shapes and forms that enable a culture of, demand for, and acceptance of improving and modifying the human body. In 2016, a Cyborg Olympics, a Championship for Athletes with Disabilities, took place in Zurich, Switzerland. Wolbring interrogates the media coverage of the Cybathlon and highlights how the narrative around the event poses various problems for Paralympic values. **Mike McNamee** and **Richard J Parnell** conclude this section by examining the four stated values of the International Paralympic Committee, namely courage, determination, equality and inspiration, and challenging them by reference to a number of prominent ethical issues in Paralympic sport. They conclude by endeavouring to offer a tentative definition of 'Paralympism' based on the discussion and interrelation between ethics and Paralympic values, something that so far no author has really attempted, despite fairly regular use of the term by several authors.

Section five adopts a case study approach to analyse the experience of a succession of recent and impending Paralympic Games. A broadly similar framework is used for each chapter, enabling some degree of comparison of experiences within the 2012, 2014 and 2016 Games. In the case of the 2018 and 2020 Games, the approach enables consideration of common problems and issues faced during the preparatory phases. The chapters provide unique insights provided by senior practitioners and academics, of experiences on the ground. Collectively, they provide pointers to the trajectory and learning experience of the Paralympic Games generally and what lessons can be learned from that process. Based upon his completed PhD studies, **Shane Kerr** claims that London 2012 has reached paradigmatic status for the way that it organised the Paralympic Games and sought to leverage its legacy potential. Beginning with an analysis of London 2012's bid, the chapter examines the position and role of key stakeholders including the organising committee, the UK government, corporate sponsors and Channel 4, the television broadcaster in the perceived success of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. From his perspective as the Paralympic Games Integration & Coordination Director for the Sochi 2014 winter Paralympic Games, **Evgeny Bukharov** describes the preparation and staging of the first ever Paralympic Winter Games in Russia, which he claims has brought positive changes in the social perception

of people with impairments and created a long-term legacy for them—tangible and intangible—not only in the host city, but in the region and the country as well. He concludes that the Games in Sochi were the best ever winter Paralympic Games in the history of the Paralympic Movement. In contrast, **Ian Brittain** and **Leonardo Jose Mataruna Dos Santos** highlight the issues that arose at the Rio 2016 Paralympics Games, the impact of the ever-worsening economic and political situation within Brazil upon the planning and organisational decisions made by the Rio Organising Committee and how these appeared to prioritise the Olympic Games over the Paralympic Games. The chapter also highlights how these events and other outside issues such as the Russian doping scandal may have impacted upon the IPC—IOC relationship and how the massively skewed power relationship between the two organisations may mean that the Olympic Games will always take precedence over the Paralympic Games in the planning and organisational decisions made by host cities. In the first of two forward-looking case studies, **Kyoungho Park** and **Gwang Ok** highlight how despite the existence of problems, the successful hosting of the PyeongChang 2018 winter Paralympic Games can be achieved through drawing from South Korea's past experience in hosting sport events and through the historical lessons provided by experiences from other countries. Finally, **Kazuo Ogoura**, president of the Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Centre and former secretary general of the Tokyo 2020 bid committee, discusses the possible legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games by dividing it into two parts: domestic impact and legacy, and international legacy and outlining some of the work that is being done in each area.

The final section of this Handbook explores particular challenges facing the Paralympic Movement as it continues to expand both in terms of the Paralympic Games and its wider development and advocacy remit. **Michael Cottingham** and **Renan Petersen-Wagner** explore the promotion of marketing in the Paralympic Games and in related disability sport contexts by considering how athletes with disabilities are perceived and how these perceptions impact the promotion of Paralympic sport in unique ways. **Aaron Beacom** and **Gill Golder** then discuss the evolving role of the university sector in developing disability sport by considering universities as not just centres for knowledge production, but also as focal points for promoting a critical pedagogy, forming the basis for developing disability sports coaches, scientists and administrators as critically reflective practitioners. They explore ways in which university portfolios can contribute to the development of athletes with a disability through, for example, expanding the disability sport coaching base, adaptive strength and conditioning programmes, supporting the work of federations and engagement with research and development. Finally, **Sakis**

Pappous and **Chris Brown** introduce the concept of legacy in relation to the Paralympic Games through a critical review of the legacy themes from the 2004 to 2016 Summer Paralympic Games.

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Part I

Conceptualising Disability Sport

2

Disability Models: Explaining and Understanding Disability Sport in Different Ways

Brett Smith and Andrea Bundon

The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine how we might explain and understand disability. Having a grasp on how disability can be explained and understood is vital for anyone working with disabled people in sport. This is because there are numerous ways to explain and understand disability and each way can, in turn, have profoundly different implications for sport, the lives of disabled people, and society at large. For example, how someone understands disability will, either implicitly or explicitly, inform what is prioritised to enhance athletic performance, what is left out in the pursuit of Paralympic medals, how athletes are supported over their life course, how research is carried out, how impaired bodies are represented in sporting organisations, the media, policy, and research, who and what is targeted in efforts to improve health, equity and equality, and how the damage often done to disabled people is undone.

Having an informed grasp on how disability can be understood is not, however, easy or straightforward. In part, this is because there are an increasing variety of ways to understand disability and no consensus on a way forward. Given this, we concentrate efforts by first outlining four models of disability. These are the medical model, the UK social model, the social relational model, and the human rights model of disability. The medical model

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and the social model are selected because, as Fitzgerald (2012) noted in her sport research, “contemporary understandings of disability have come to be understood through two key models of disability, the medical and social models” (p. 244). The social relational model and the human rights model are focused on as together they begin to map some of the more emerging ways that disability might be productively understood within the context of sport and physical activity. After attending to each of the four models in turn, the chapter offers additional future directions for understanding disability, sport, and physical activity.

2.1 Medical Model

The medical model, or what is sometimes referred to as the individual model of disability, has historically been a dominant way of understanding disability. It defines disability as any lack of ability resulting from impairment to perform an activity within the range considered normal for a person (Thomas 2007). Thus, in the medical model, disability is understood as ‘caused’ by parts of the body that are lacking or do not work ‘properly’. A medical model has often, either knowingly or unknowingly, underpinned how disability is perceived, described, and depicted in various sporting contexts. For example, Brittain (2004) observed that disability sport is dominated by medical conceptualisations that affect disabled people at all levels, as disability sport administration is dominated by medical-related practitioners and disability sport classifies participants along medical lines. Howe (2008) further argued that perhaps the most important manner in which athletes are understood and governed is via the classification of disability sports, which is a largely medical practice conducted mostly by able-bodied people “that can lead to stigmatisation and alienation because it ultimately creates a hierarchy of bodies” (pp. 64–65). More recently in a broad overview of the history of the Paralympic Games, Legg and Steadward (2011) suggested that “a medical model in which sport was used for the purposes of rehabilitation” (p. 1099) dominated understandings of disabled people within contexts like the Paralympic Movement.

Despite historically being a common way to understand disability, the medical model has been heavily criticised. These critiques largely emerged from those within disability rights movements and were subsequently taken up and developed by academics working in disability studies. One problem of the medical model is that it relies on bio-physical assumptions of ‘normality’ to define disability. In relying on this, the socio-cultural forces that play a

major part in defining—constructing—what is ‘normal’ are overlooked and left unchallenged. This can have dangerous consequences including perpetuating a ‘normal’/‘abnormal’ binary. There is the danger of defining disabled people as defective (i.e. ‘not normal’) and others (‘the normals’) as definitive or superior human beings who can assume authority and exercise power. As Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) pointed out:

How societies divide ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ bodies is central to the production and sustenance of what it means to be human in society. It defines access to nations and communities. It determines choice and participation in civic life. It determines what constitutes ‘rational’ men and women and who should have the right to be part of society and who should not. (p. 65)

Another criticism of the medical model of disability is that it locates the ‘problem’ of disability squarely within the body of the individual, rather than explaining disability as an artefact of society and challenging oppressive societal attitudes and structures (Goodley 2012; Thomas 2007). It has also been critiqued for depicting disability as inevitably a personal physical tragedy and a psychological trauma that should be overcome. In so doing, it paints a very negative picture of disability. For example, although disabled athletes do not necessarily see themselves in such ways and the picture is more complicated than presented by academics (Berger 2009), it has been argued that Paralympians are often depicted in the media either as tragic victims of personal misfortune inspiring pity or as inspirational ‘supercrips’ who transcend their impairments through sport (Hardin and Hardin 2004). The supercrip stereotype has been criticised as oppressive because it places the onus on disabled people to make heroic efforts to triumph over their physical or mental limitations, thereby casting disability as an individual problem (Brittain 2010; Howe 2011; Peers 2009). In light of such problems with a medical model understanding of disability and the growing criticisms of it, alternative understandings have been developed. One of these can broadly be labelled the social model of disability.

2.2 The UK Social Model

The social model is sometimes talked about in the singular as ‘the social model’. However, it is worth briefly noting that there are different forms of the model. For example, there is the Nordic social relative model of disability. This model rejects the medical model dichotomy between illness and health.

It sees the individual as interacting with their environment and, importantly, impairment and disability as interacting with one another on a continuum. The North American social model of disability, often referred to as the social minority model, sees disability not so much as the inability of the disabled individual to adapt to the demands of the environment or linked to impairment but rather as the failure of the social environment to adjust to the needs and aspirations of citizens with disabilities.

Derived from the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), and underpinned by Marxism, the UK social model¹ understands disabled people as socially oppressed. It asserts that disability is not caused by impairment but by the social barriers (structural and attitudinal) that people with impairments (e.g. physical, sensory, and intellectual) come up against in every arena. In this regard, having a bodily impairment does not equate with disability. As Oliver (1996) famously stated, “disablement has nothing to do with the body” (pp. 41–42). Instead, and severing the causal link between the body and disability that the medical model created, disability is wholly and exclusively social. It is a consequence and problem of society. The ‘solution’, therefore, lay not in cures, psychological interventions, or physical adjustments to the impaired body. Rather improvements in disabled people’s lives necessitate the sweeping away of social barriers that oppress people, and the development of social policies that facilitate full social inclusion and citizenship. Accordingly, as Owens (2015) notes, the UK social model is different from the Nordic social relative model in terms of links between disability and impairment. Whereas the former severs any link between impairment and disability, the latter sees impairment and disability as interacting with one another. The difference between the UK social model and the North American model of disability is that the latter uses a minority group rights-based approach, with political action being grounded on the individualisation of disability and identity politics rather than, as in the UK social model, a materialist focus on oppression at a more structural level than individual level.

Despite such differences, the social models of disability have in varying degrees been useful for many disabled people. For example, the social model has in many instances been used to successfully challenge discrimination and marginalisation, link civil rights and political activism, and enable disabled people to claim their rightful place in society. It has been a powerful tool for producing social and political change, for challenging the material problems experienced by many disabled people, and for driving emancipatory types of research, such as participatory action research. It has also been influential in producing anti-discrimination legislation in the form of various disability

discrimination acts around the world, including in the UK, France, and America. Although certainly not perfect or always followed, these acts mean that disabled people in numerous countries should now legally have equal access to gyms, sport clubs, sporting stadiums, employment, and so on. When disabled people encounter the social model, the effect can also be revelatory and liberatory. Rather than seeing themselves as the 'problem' and the 'solution' traced to their own individual body, disabled people have been empowered by the social model to recognise that society is often the problem and that the removal of social barriers to their inclusion and participation in social life is what is needed.

Within the context of sport, physical activity and leisure studies, the social model has been drawn on to explain and understand disability. For example, Tregaskis (2004) provided some practical examples of how the social model can and has been used by disabled people to engage mainstream organisations and practitioners that were operating within individualised (medicalised) models of disability. She suggested that, because the social model focuses on external barriers to access and inclusion, it can depersonalise access issues and thus create an environment where the disabled and the non-disabled can work collaboratively to design more inclusive programmes without resorting to finger pointing, blaming or an 'us' versus 'them' mentality. In their research, Huang and Brittain (2006) likewise highlighted that many of the athletes they interviewed drew on social model understandings of disability and commented on various externally imposed barriers, be they environmental restrictions or those brought about by prejudice, that served to shape their sport experiences. More recently, in a review of disability sport literature, Smith and Sparkes (2012) noted that the ideas supporting the social model had been evoked to explain limited participation rates in disabled sport at community and recreational levels.

The social model also appears in the literature pertaining to the Paralympic Games and the Paralympic Movement. For example, Howe (2008) explained, that at least in the early years of the event, the Paralympic Games were often portrayed as regressive in the context of the disability rights movements that helped to create and advance the social model. The criticism was that sport, with its unapologetic emphasis on bodily perfection, reproduced rather than challenged the medicalised view of disability that the disabled people's organisations had fought so hard to reject. The result is what Purdue and Howe (2012) have termed the "Paralympic paradox" (p. 194). This refers to the tenuous position occupied by impaired athletes as they are pressured to showcase their athleticism (distancing themselves from devalued, disabled identities) to able-bodied audiences and to simultaneously perform as athletes *with*

a disability to disabled audiences as a show of solidarity with disability communities and disability rights agendas. Though not explicitly locating their work within a social model, Braye et al. (2013) research also supports this argument in that their analysis of the opinions of disabled activists towards the Paralympic Games found that many in this group held a negative view of the Games that contrasted with an existing, yet overly positive, academic narrative of the 'empowering' and 'inclusive' potential of the event. Participants in this study were cynical of popular portrayals of the Games and Paralympic athletes as these misrepresent the wider population of disabled people. Braye et al. concluded that, for disabled activists, the Paralympic Games are seen to be counterproductive to challenging oppression and disability rights beyond sport. In light of such findings, Bundon and Clarke (2015) added that the ardent adoption of the social model of disability by disabled peoples' organisations contrasted with the medical origins of the Paralympic Games in rehabilitation hospitals, explains in part the ambivalent relationship between the Paralympic Movement and the disability rights movement.

Whilst under the umbrella of the social model important achievements have been made, this model of disability has for many years been subject to numerous criticisms. Largely emanating from disability studies, critical disability studies, and the sociology of the body, these include the following. Firstly, it is argued a world free of all physical barriers is idealistic partly because it is not practically possible to adjust the social environmental or make changes within society that positively impact on all disabled people (Shakespeare 2014). Secondly, the social model has been criticised for ignoring disabled people's lived experiences. In so doing, the 'personal is political' (or the 'political is personal') feminist slogan is left unacknowledged, people's 'private' accounts are artificially separated from 'public' issues, and the variety of lived experiences of impairment overlooked.

Thirdly, and related, the UK social model has been heavily critiqued on several levels for excluding the body (Hughes and Patterson 1997; Thomas 2007). By conceptually separating impairment from disability, a dualism was created that resulted in treating the impaired body as simply biological and of little concern. In so doing, not only was the body left to medical interpretation, it was wrongly conceptualised as pre-social, inert, un-effected by culture, and isolated from people's embodied experiences (Hughes and Paterson 1997). One upshot of this is that the agency of bodies is overlooked. Likewise the impaired body as a location of socio-cultural oppression during interactions is ignored, thereby leaving unchallenged and unchanged another way in which disabled people's inclusion and participation in social life can be restricted.