

DON'T JUDGE ME BY MY WALKING. AN ARGUMENT FOR INCLUSION

Authors: **Aubrey Shaw, M.S.**, and **Sharon Kay Stoll, Ph.D.**
University of Idaho

Abstract

In this paper, we first make a case for why ethics, and specifically ethical education practices, are important to the study of sport disability. Second, we argue for perspective taking and challenge the reader to reexamine federal and state laws directed toward disability policy. Third, we ask the reader to address the question: does law build a caring environment? The paper is rooted in three educational concepts: ethics, perspectives, and care for people with physical disabilities. Examples are offered of inclusionary practices in physical education and recreation. Current research in disability sports studies focusing on ethics and ethical practice is highlighted. The conclusion focuses on the importance of ethical communities.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past two years we, the authors, have been on a journey to read everything we could find on disability sport. In general, most of the works are very influenced by the US scholarly perspective, based primarily on interpretation of US law. Outside of Karen DePauw's work (DePauw, 2012), most journal articles discuss some portion of the legal mandate of activity for all. An exception to that was Jeffrey Martin's 2018 text, *Handbook of disability sport and exercise psychology*. Martin gathered a large treasure trove of journal articles on disability sport and exercise psychology.

In Martin's work (2018), we were introduced to the disarming and provocative work of Michael Oliver (Oliver, 1993; Oliver, 1978; Oliver, 2018), a disability studies professor in Great Britain, who has lived with a physical impairment for the majority of his adult life.¹ Unlike writers in the US who are focused on policy and law, Oliver broaches the subject of disability with philosophical candor and challenging rhetoric. Much of his work is phenomenological - a description of living with a disability - while his other works challenge perspective (Oliver, 1978). One of his titles is, "What is so wonderful about walking?" With that disarming question, he then leads us through our own limitations and biases, both implicit and explicit (Harvard University, 2018), towards individuals who do not walk or who walk differently. A second point of Oliver's paper is also disarming. He focuses not on policy and the law, but the humanness of living with a disability, and how policy and law misses the point of the individual. In

¹ For a listing of his works go to Leeds University (Oliver M. , The disability archive, 2018).
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considering his paper, we are going to discuss two factors that may improve how researchers examine disability in sport issues. We know that policy precedes practice, but theory and philosophy should precede policy. Unfortunately, in our review of the literature, little is written about the importance of point of view, i.e., perspective of the researcher and of those who study disability in sport. The humanness of the individual with a physical disability should be our first priority and our first concern in research. With that being said, the more we understand about our responsibilities to the humanness of the practice of working with individuals with disabilities, the more we can become passionate about policy and laws that affect these people. We will also argue that laws and policies have little meaning without an ethical viewpoint of inclusion, which usually demands a different perspective.

ETHICS

According to Lumpkin, Stoll, and Beller (2003) ethics is defined as, “the theoretical study of morality. Ethics is also the standard of morality that a professional should follow” (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 2003). Morality is then defined as, “the motives, intentions, and actions of individuals as they are directed towards others and how these are judged by the greater society (Lumpkin, Stoll, & Beller, 2003). Ethics is the application of morality – that is how people should treat each other. Ethics serves as a societal basis in our responsibility to others and ethics ultimately becomes the character of its population. Placed into the context of this paper, do our ethics reflect the moral values that encompass inclusion, acceptance, and support for the entire population? Are ethics taught and nurtured? On face value, it would appear so since laws exist to force inclusion, but reality paints a different picture. Let us examine one example of lack of opportunity for people with physical disabilities to participate in physical education, recreation, and sport.

Disability laws were created over a period of thirty years with the intention to do good for society and do good for people with physical disabilities. Perhaps society saw the ethical need and moral duty of beneficence and society felt an obligation to do no harm, to prevent harm, remove harm, and do good (Frankena, 1973) for individuals with physical disabilities. For the first time, society through its ethics supposedly viewed people with physical disabilities as humans rather than things. Therefore, several laws were passed: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Americans with Disability Act of 1990, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. All these laws have a common theme which is, people with physical disabilities should not be discriminated against in public spaces such as: transportation, schools, and public establishments. For our disciplines of physical education and recreation, these laws specifically state that all individuals have a right to engage in activities with others in physical education, recreation, or sport. The intention of these laws is inclusion, however, as in all application of law – law is first interpreted and then applied. In every state in the US, these laws are

interpreted by each state's individual standard. Thus, how the laws are actually implemented are not so inclusive for individuals with physical disabilities state by state and perhaps not so ethical in practice.

Let us give a case example. The law specifically states that children with physical disabilities should be included in physical education class. Let us assume that the lesson for the day is soccer. Let us assume that there is a student in a wheelchair in the class. The class meets on the outdoor soccer field. The able-bodied children are given the rules of the game and they begin play. The child in the wheelchair is given a directive with his or her aide to "walk around the track", while the game is occurring. The law's intention unfortunately does not drive the motive or the action of what has been implemented. When asked why the student in a wheelchair is not on the field, the answer is three-fold. (1) The chance of injury is too great for the student in the wheelchair, (2) the wheel chair is a hazard to all of the students, and (3) to include the student in the wheelchair, fundamentally changes the game, which therefore is interpreted to mean the student in the wheelchair should not be included in the game. Therefore, the child is given an individual activity to do and is still in the general vicinity of the game².

We have to engage in cognitive decision making to make a better right choice in this case. What is inclusion? Is inclusion being an actual member of the play experience? Or is inclusion generally being included in part of the class experience? We believe the case above is not inclusion if the child in a wheelchair is not participating in the experience. Here is our argument addressing the three points above.

1. Potential injury to the student in a wheel chair. Potential injury is a reality in every physical education class that exists. Excluding students from play because of potential injury would exclude every child. Therefore, this notion of injury is not a responsible choice by the instructor. Inclusion interpreted as full inclusion means developing a different strategy and a different perspective about game play.
2. Potential injury of wheel chair bound toward able bodied students. "The wheelchair is a hazard and should not be on the field". In examining this concern, it is true. A possibility of injury does exist, but thoughtful consideration of inclusion should develop strategies in which students in wheelchairs can participate. An often-used strategy in adapted physical education programs is using students in wheelchairs as the last line of defense before the goalie. The students in wheelchairs have a specific range of movement in a half-arc around the goalie. Because the

² This case is an actual example of the arguments offered by physical educators on why inclusion is not possible. And the example of the child being pushed by an aid is an actual example told to us during one of our workshops in the past year.

students in wheelchairs have a limited range and position, students who are able-bodied learn the spatial area of the students in wheelchairs and are able to function around them. Students who are able learn quickly how to adapt to the situation at hand³.

3. Inclusion fundamentally changes the game – Yes, any inclusion will fundamentally change the game. If this argument is used – there will never be students with physical disabilities in the soccer game. The choice of inclusion rests with physical educators, recreators, and coaches who, we are sure, would never want to believe that they are discriminating against the child with a physical disability. The choice of inclusion rests with these individuals. They are the power authorities to allow children with physical disabilities to play with everyone else. If we want children to be included, then our first most important step is to include. The game is going to be fundamentally different, however, that does not mean that a game cannot occur.
4. An example of this fundamental change is to understand that a student in a wheelchair plays with their hands and not their feet. All soccer participants must learn that a student in a wheelchair playing soccer uses their hands as a function of what students who are able-bodied use as feet. Therefore, all participants need to be instructed on how the game is played with students in wheelchairs. Fundamentally soccer is played with the feet, an exception is the goalie. However, for inclusion to occur with the students in wheelchairs, strategies should be developed to learn how to play against “the hands” of the wheel chair students.

Coaches, recreators, and physical educators need to purposefully think about their choices and intentions before they send the student in a wheelchair to the track with their aide or instruct the student in a wheelchair to sit out and be a “score keeper”. Yes, it is easier to instruct the student in a wheelchair to go to the track, than it is to develop a lesson plan in inclusion. The choice to exclude as well as the choice to include is a personal choice.

A change in ethical perspective occurs when action follows motive and intention. We must have the courage to design, plan, and implement meaningful actions for inclusive instruction. Or in Oliver’s words, we must not see the chair but see the child (Oliver, 2018). In the soccer game above, inclusion and focusing on humanness will also mean playing on a different surface than a grassy field. Soccer does not have to be played outdoors, it can be played in a gym. Or, why not play the game on an outside surface that permits the student in a wheelchair to move his or her chair about efficiently?

Doing the right thing, i.e. focusing on humanness and inclusion, will always outweigh the negatives or the hassles. Remember the child’s opportunity to participate rests in the teacher, the coach, or the recreator’s hands. Kowalski and Rizzo (1996) found that teachers and coaches often do not

³ For an example of this concept see the Youtube video, Adapted Sport. (N.A. , 2011)
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feel educationally prepared to include students with physical disabilities into their classes (as cited in Martin, 2018). Feeling unprepared for working with this population may be a reality but is not a good excuse. The internet has numerous resources and examples of inclusion – all it takes is a little inventiveness and a view toward Oliver’s argument of humanness in decision making.

PERSPECTIVE

Oliver’s work in the UK has had a decided effect on perspective taking in relation to people with physical disabilities in the UK. From our experience in writing, speaking, doing workshops and webinars, teachers and recreation professionals appear not to see the importance of philosophical and ethical issues that plague opportunities for people with physical disabilities (Shaw & Stoll, 2018). Our experience is supported by Jespersen and McNamee who state that “In the formation of the multi-disciplinary field that investigates the participation of the disabled persons in all forms of physical activity, little ethical and philosophical work has been published” (Jespersen & McNamee, 2009, p. 1). They argue that we must “... open up and critically explore a range of conceptual and ethical issues and perspectives that have arisen with respect to the engagement of persons with dis/abilities in a range of physical activity contexts...” (Jespersen & McNamee, 2009, p. 2). Oliver makes a poignant statement about the perception of disability, to rephrase his work. To be included should not be about keeping the standard fundamental game inclusive of individuals with two legs, the ideal of normal, whatever that may mean, but to create a social environment where children can play and where to be legless or in a wheelchair is irrelevant (Oliver, 1993, p. 137)

The societal environment is critical to the discussion of perspectives about physical disability because the environment will always affect us either in a compassionate way or a limited, selfish way.

Perhaps American society does not view legless activity as irrelevant, because of the ideal of normalcy. The American mindset appears to be one where science should “make” people with physical disabilities normal, or worse, people with physical disabilities should not be amongst the normal.

To change perspective demands a practice known as reversibility- or to challenge one’s own perspective. Perspective taking is defined by one of our leading moral development educators, Lickona (1991, p. 55), as, “the ability to take the viewpoint of other people, see a situation as they see it, imagining how they might think, react, and feel”. Lickona continues to state that perspective taking is, “a prerequisite for moral judgment: We cannot very well respect people and act justly towards their needs if we do not understand them” (Lickona, 1991, p. 55). Our biases tied to our busy lives often affect our ability to take time and engage in meaningful moral reflection and perspective taking. If Oliver is correct that we judge people on their walking or lack thereof then we as a society need to be better at showing compassion to others who are different.

Disability scholars have touched the surface of how complex perspective taking is. Smith (2009) discusses perspective taking as a complex process that takes time and effort. It is difficult to imagine oneself differently situated, or imagining being another person, arising from the way imagination is constrained by embodied experience and the social possibilities foreclosed by a person's specific embodiment" (Smith, 2009, p. 61). In teaching programs and in developing recreational professionals, a strong program in perspective taking needs to be implemented. The biggest hurdle to overcome is the biases of what one perceives people with physical disabilities cannot do. Our goal should instead focus on what people with physical disabilities can do. Perspective taking is such an important application of moral education.

HOW TO TEACH PERSPECTIVE TAKING

As we noted earlier, it appears to us that preparatory classes in recreation and physical education focus on the legal mandates of disability law and thus the law's direct effect on programming and curriculum. Students learn volumes about why inclusion is law, but learn little on how to actually include, and little to none on developing an inclusive philosophy of teaching (Martin, 2018)

Our focus here is not on practice, but actually on inclusive philosophy and humanness. One way to accomplish this is through the practice of perspective taking. Perspective taking is understanding the issues at hand, placing oneself into the condition – and seeing the other as extension of self. However, there are hiccups to the practice, it is not easily done. Communication and relatedness between parties is essential (Buber, 1971) However, ".....communication of personal meaning and experience is difficult to share, [which places]... further constraints on one's ability to imagine oneself differently situated, or to image being another ..." (Smith, 2009, p. 60). To be effective, classes on perspective taking should be existential and meaningful, which only occurs if we relate to another.

We argue the above demands a hands-on approach, an existential approach, in the classroom. That is, pair the learning of the law with actual application of learning the humanness of disability. One lesson plan might be to include people with disabilities sharing their stories of struggle and how it affects them daily. We have tried this in clinics, demonstrations, class instruction, and web talks, it works quite well (Shaw & Stoll, 2016; Shaw & Stoll, 2017). As part of a lesson, challenge the able bodied to participate in an ordinary everyday daily task with an acute disability. For example, all students are to unbutton and button their shirts, or tie their shoes with only one hand – the non-dominant hand. Such an exercise would allow all students to not only hear about the struggles but to engage in difficult practices. However, such an activity cannot occur, until open communication is welcomed and wanted. Both parties have to be able to be vulnerable with each other and have a conversation. It is discouraging to educators who want to engage in perspective taking when interpretation of federal

policy does not allow for these conversations. By law a teacher or leader cannot ask a person about his/her impairment therefore, many people do not ask, and the conversation is never started. Hopefully, the instructor can start that conversation.

Once the above lesson occurs, perspective taking thus begins and the students may imagine themselves as a person of disability. Smith (2009) discusses imagining other people's lives which is important in perspective taking.

Our narrative imagination is our most valuable tool in our exploration of others' worlds, for it assists us in seeing beyond the immediately visible. It is our ability to image other possible lives' – our own and others- that creates our bond with diverse social and historical worlds (Smith, 2009, pp. 57-58).

Perspective taking could be a very important teaching tool about inclusiveness. Remember, however, that perspective taking is not an easy process.

Scholars have found limitations to perspective taking. Levinas states that another being will always be another. "...Levinas's account, imagining putting ourselves in the place of another person is problematic because the other is other: absolutely and completely other to me" (as cited in Smith, 2009). Perspective taking requires disciplined inquiry, time, and work and is a moral development issue. One has to be willingly to participate in perspective taking to make it a thoughtful process. Unfortunately, perspective taking is often seen as a simple process, however, that is a fallacy that we must face and overcome. Change of perception is a thoughtful, continuous process.

CONCLUSION

People with physical disabilities are amazing humans. As Smith states so brilliantly, "It is our ability to image other possible lives' – our own and others- that creates our bond with diverse social and historical worlds (Smith, 2009, pp. 57-58). Individuals with physical disabilities will only be included when we as people care for each other and value the humanness of each. Unfortunately, we live in a society in which law defines ethics. The result then becomes justice superseding caring for others.

Are we actually teaching care for other individuals or do we just think we care? Perspective taking inspires care through development of empathy, compassion, and understanding. Only through seeing individuals in their unique situations can we consider how we would want to be treated if we were they. Garrison, a pedagogist, said that

"...the ethics of care is concerned with webs of personal connection, concern, and care for particular others and our self" (Garrison, 2010, p. 44)

A paradox exists – the ethics of justice directs what all of us teachers and recreators should do, but the ethics of justice hardly ever informs us on the importance of ethics of care or the humanness of the

other. Instead we teach our young professionals the importance of the law, but seldom teach the ethics of care or the use of perspective taking.

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