

SOURCES OF ENJOYMENT IN SPORT REPORTED BY SOUTH AFRICAN SPORTS PARTICIPANTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the sources of enjoyment in competitive sport experienced by individuals with visual impairments. Study participants were 20 sportsmen with visual impairments, all of whom had sufficient skill and experience to compete in South African national championships in goalball, swimming, or track and field. Each of these sportsmen was interviewed using a semi-structured qualitative interview with an open-ended response format. Verbatim transcripts of each interview were made. Two qualified researchers proceeded to apply the techniques of inductive content analysis to produce categories of meaning evident in the subjects' discussions about their sources of enjoyment in sport participation. Five general themes emerged from this analysis: (a) Perceptions of competence, (b) positive social experiences, (c) physical fitness, (d) mental aspects, and (f) emotional aspects. These themes are consistent with the sources of meaning identified through research on sportspersons without disabilities, which provides support for the growing recognition of the substantial similarities between sportspersons with disabilities and those without disabilities.

Key words: Enjoyment in sport; Meaning in sport; Disability sport;
Athletes with visual impairments.

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing acceptance that participant enjoyment is a legitimate construct with important motivational consequences for involvement in competitive sport (Scanlon & Simons, 1992). Harter's (1981) persuasive argument that joy and positive emotions must be resurrected as central dimensions in any attempt to understand human behaviour is often cited as the genesis of a growing body of knowledge in sport science that attempts to define both the sources of enjoyment for sport participants as well as the role that enjoyment plays in participant motivation. Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) concluded that enjoyment is a broad motivational construct that may have intrinsic and/or extrinsic sources and can be the product of both achievement and non-achievement outcomes. This comprehensive approach to understanding how enjoyment functions within sport contexts led Scanlon and Simons to provide the following operational definition of enjoyment: "a positive affective response to the sport experience that reflects generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun" (1992: 203). This definition of enjoyment has been adopted for use within this study.

The recognition of enjoyment as an important motivational construct has been documented in research completed in a variety of sports with various age and skill level groups. Children's anticipation that participation in sport will be an enjoyable experience has been identified consistently as one of the primary reasons they choose to become involved (Gould *et al.*,

1987; Klint & Weiss, 1987). If enjoyment does not materialize or if it fades over time, so too does participant motivation. This leads to an increased likelihood that children will drop out of sport (Klint & Weiss, 1987). Wankel and Kreisel (1985) identified “comparing skills against others,” “excitement of the game,” “feelings of personal accomplishment,” and “improving skills” as the most often cited sources of enjoyment in youth sport. In a follow-up interview with the same subjects, “being with friends” was added as another important source of enjoyment.

Enjoyment may also be important for top-level sportspersons. In a study of Alpine ski racers, May (1987) found that “having fun” was one of the central affective components of success in elite level ski competition. The skiers reported that feelings of “having fun” helped them improve their focus, defuse their feelings of anxiety, and provided them with energy. Scanlan *et al.* (1989) provided a detailed analysis of the crucial role that feelings of enjoyment played in the development of persistence during the competitive phase of the careers of elite figure skaters.

THE PROBLEM

Athletes with disabilities often appear to be psychologically similar to their able-bodied peers (Asken & Goodling, 1986). In her review of research on the social and psychological dimensions of sport for individuals with disabilities, Sherrill (1986) noted that feelings of fun and enjoyment were among the motivational factors consistently mentioned in the adapted physical activity literature. She cited a dissertation by Cooper (1984) on athletes with cerebral palsy who identified “challenge and competition”, “love of sport”, “fitness and health”, “knowledge and sport skill development”, “contribution to the team”, and “involvement in A team atmosphere” as positive motivational factors. In relation specifically to individuals with visual impairments, Mastro *et al.* (1988) found similar psychological characteristics displayed by sighted and unsighted beep baseball players.

The importance of identifying sources of enjoyment in sport lies in the power of this positive emotional state to attract participants to an active lifestyle and then to encourage them to sustain their involvement. The identification of the sources of enjoyment for advanced level performers, for example, may serve to help structure competitive sport programmes that will be attractive to persons with disabilities. Despite the many points of similarity between the sport experiences of individuals with and without disabilities, the need to conduct research with individuals with specific disabilities must not be underestimated (Asken & Goodling, 1986). By identifying the sources of enjoyment specifically for sportspersons with visual impairments, it is hoped that this study will contribute to efforts to provide these individuals with attractive opportunities to participate in competitive sport.

METHODOLOGY

This study adhered as closely as possible to the interview procedures outlined by Scanlan *et al.* (1989b) in their study of the sources of enjoyment and stress experienced by elite figure skaters. In their seminal effort in qualitative inquiry, interviews with skaters were conducted according to a semi-structured, open-ended protocol of questions (Scanlan *et al.*, 1989a; Scanlan *et al.*, 1989b; Scanlan *et al.*, 1991). Inductive content analysis was then utilized to generate general categories or *themes* of meaning relating to the sources of enjoyment and sources of stress that were evident in the comments made by the skaters. In replicating this

methodology, this study on athletes with visual impairments entailed the collection of data during interviews, followed by an inductive analysis of the data to produce categories of meaning related to sources of enjoyment in sport.

Phase one: Preparation

A review of literature on enjoyment in sport as well as methods of qualitative inquiry served as the basis for the design of the interview protocol, the translation of the interview protocol, and the training of research personnel.

Design of the interview protocol: The interview was designed by the authors of this study, both of whom had previous experience using qualitative interview methods to collect data from sports participants with physical disabilities. McCracken's (1988) guidelines for conducting the "long interview" were used to structure this process. The specific protocol of questions followed closely the protocol utilized by Scanlan *et al.* (1989b; 1991). The protocol began with questions about participants' personal history, including origin of impairment, severity of impairment and past achievements in sport. Questions in the main body of the interview were intended to gather qualitative data. The open-ended questions began with a definition of enjoyment, and then they were focused on the sources of enjoyment personally experienced in sport. The end of the interview consisted of general questions about the participants' ideas about the future of sport for individuals with visual impairments. These questions were intended to provide an appropriate closing for the interview by changing the focus to less personal issues.

Translation of the interview protocol: It was anticipated that the participants in this study would be either English speaking or Afrikaans speaking. Because the interviews focused on issues related to personal experience, it was considered essential that participants have the opportunity to communicate in their "home language." This necessitated the translation of all interview questions (originally generated in English) into Afrikaans. Two qualified high school language teachers, fluent in both languages and active in sport for individuals with disabilities, were responsible for the translation. They worked in a consensual manner to arrive at the precise Afrikaans wording for each of the questions and subsequent probes to encourage responses from the participants. One of the authors of this research was also fully bi-lingual, and the translations were subject to her acceptance.

Phase two: Data gathering

Selection of participants: Twenty participants participated as subjects in this study. The National Sport Convener for Sport for the Physically Disabled in South Africa produced a list of sportsmen and sportswomen with visual impairments who met the following criterion: individuals who had participated in national level championship competitions in any one sport for a minimum of five years. This criterion was adopted to ensure that all participants were serious sportspersons who had been successful for a sustained period of time at high levels of competition. Twenty-eight men and two women met this criterion. All participants were involved either in goalball, swimming, or track and field athletics. Consultations with officials within disability sport confirmed that there are almost no women with visual impairments who have had five years or more experience in high-level competitive sport in South Africa. According to these officials, boys and girls with visual impairments who attend special schools have a reasonable opportunity to participate in sport. However, once they leave the supporting structure of the school, most competitors drop out of sport. These

officials were of the opinion that employment becomes a priority, transportation becomes a huge problem, and the general expectations for adult women with disabilities within South Africa does not place a high priority on sport involvement. Regardless of the reasons for the lack of eligible women, it was decided to delimit this study only to the perceptions of male participants.

Once the list of eligible sportsmen was identified, the schedule of national championships for goalball, swimming and athletics was obtained. General meetings were scheduled at the beginning of each of the championship events to invite eligible sportsmen to participate in the interviews. The format for each of these meetings was the same. One of the authors described the purpose and methods of the research and requested volunteers to participate in the interviews. Each volunteer was then scheduled for a two-hour interview session at a time he considered non-disruptive to his competition. The request was well received at each site and a total of 20 sportsmen from the three different sports volunteered to participate. A description of the characteristics of these participants is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS (N=20)

Means		Sport Specialisation			Sport Classification		
Age	Years in Sport	Goalball	Swim	T & F	B1	B2	B3
25.7	7.3	9	3	8	8	8	4

Interview procedures: Each interview was conducted in a private area and in the home language of the participant by the bi-lingual author of this study. The purpose and methods of the research were described again. All participants gave their consent for an audio tape recording to be made of the interview. All participants were then taken through the same protocol of questions, beginning with general questions about origin and severity of visual impairment as well as competition history. The following definition of enjoyment was then read: "By enjoyment, I'm referring to the positive feelings or emotions that you could have had about your sport experience, such as pleasure, fun, liking, or loving the experience" (Scanlan *et al.*, 1989b: 67). Questions then moved to asking participants to describe when, where and how they experienced personal feelings of enjoyment in sport. Participants were then asked to add any information they considered to relate to their enjoyment of sport. The interviews were concluded with general questions about participants' perceptions about the future of sport for individuals with visual impairments. Following the conclusion of the interview, participants were thanked for their efforts.

Phase three: Data analysis

As part of the preparation for data analysis, the authors spent a two-hour session refreshing their understanding of the inductive process for content analysis. Prior to processing the data, however, the audio tapes of the interviews required transcription and translation.

Transcription and translation of the data: Two bi-lingual qualified high school language teachers were hired to transcribe and translate the audio tapes of the interviews. One was a teacher of Afrikaans and the other a teacher of English. These were the same teachers who had translated the interview protocols, so they were both familiar with the purposes and methods of the research. Because it had been decided to produce this research report in

English, all data had to be expressed in English prior to processing. Of the 20 interviews completed, five were originally in English and 15 were in Afrikaans, thus requiring translation.

The procedure of transcription and translation was as follows: (a) the Afrikaans teacher first transcribed the audio tapes from the Afrikaans participants into written Afrikaans, (b) the Afrikaans teacher then translated the written Afrikaans into written English, (c) the English teacher independently translated the written Afrikaans into written English, and finally (d) the two teachers produced a mutually acceptable translated transcript of each interview by comparing their respective translations and producing a single written English version to use as the data in this project. Straightforward transcriptions were made of the five interviews conducted in English by the English teacher. The accuracy of the transcriptions translated from Afrikaans was checked by bilingual author of this study, who listened to the interviews in the original Afrikaans as she read the English translation (the author was Afrikaans speaking and had earned professional credentials for teaching both Afrikaans and English.) Once all the data was available in English, it was possible to proceed with the process of inductive content analysis.

Inductive content analysis: The authors first read and re-read each of the transcripts independently in order to familiarise themselves with the content. Once a level of familiarity was achieved, the researchers worked together to identify direct quotations from the transcripts that they perceived to identify sources of enjoyment. The content of each quotation was limited to an expression of a single, recognisable aspect of a participant's experience. These comments, which varied in length from a few words to several sentences, became the raw data for content analysis (Scanlan *et al.* 1989a). A total of 429 comments were identified from the 20 interviews.

The purpose of using inductive analysis was to allow categories of meaning to emerge from the perusal of the transcriptions. The process began with a process of inference where each author worked independently to group the 429 comments into *clusters* according to some perceived common tie or relationship among the comments. These initial clusters were then reviewed to see if the clusters could be organised to form still more *general categories* of meaning. Each researcher continued to work independently until satisfied that each of the categories identified was separate and distinct from the other categories, and that the clusters of quotes within each of the categories was valid. Finally, the categories were reviewed to determine if a still more general umbrella concept or *theme* could be identified by grouping one or more of the categories together in order to describe a distinct source of enjoyment.

Consensual validation: Consensual validation involved an interactive process between the two authors. When finished with their independent inductive analysis of the content, the two authors presented their findings to each other, including the rationale supporting their identification of clusters, categories and themes. Discussions between the authors continued until an agreement about the content of each cluster, category and theme was achieved. Once there was consensual agreement on the structure for describing the sources of enjoyment, the authors reviewed all of the comments together and tallied the number of participants who provided quotes in each category. This calculation of the number of participants who identified each source of enjoyment was generated to indicate how common each source of enjoyment was among the participants.

Confirming the integrity of the structure

In order to confirm that the structure of enjoyment as revealed in the interviews was accurately reported, an outside source to review the data analysis was recruited.

Training of additional research personnel: In addition to the authors of this study, two research assistants who were specialising in sport for individuals with disabilities were trained to assist in data analysis. The training process involved a workshop on the nature of the qualitative inquiry and the method of the long interview. Each assistant completed an inductive content analysis on transcripts from two practice interviews and then worked together to compare their identification of clusters, categories and themes of meaning. Following this training, the assistants were tasked to work together in a consensual fashion to confirm or revise the structure of clusters, categories and themes generated by the authors. First, they were given a list of the five themes and a separate list of the 12 categories. They were then asked to organise the categories according to the themes. Second, they were given a list of the 20 clusters identified by the authors and asked to organise the clusters according to the 12 categories of meaning. Finally, they reviewed the entire collection of 429 comments drawn from the interviews by the researchers and placed each quote into what they perceived to be the most appropriate cluster.

RESULTS

The review of the framework and all of the comments emerging from the interviews by the two research assistants produced the following results. Assigned the task of matching the themes to the categories, they replicated exactly the structure that had been produced by the authors. When matching the list of clusters to the general categories identified, they deduced a structure that was identical to the structure of the researchers. Their final task was the arrangement of the comments into the pre-identified clusters. Their decisions were consistent with the arrangement produced by the authors in 360 of the 429 comments drawn from the interviews. In summary, the 100% compatibility of categories into themes and the arrangement of clusters into categories, and the 84% level of agreement with the classification of comments into clusters, are considered sufficient to support the initial framework produced by the authors. The framework therefore is proposed as a reasonable framework for summarising the sources of enjoyment revealed in the interviews.

The results of this study are presented in Table 2. Following the process of consensual validation, 20 clusters of comments were drawn from the interviews, from which emerged 12 general categories of meaning that were subsequently organized in to five themes that identified the sources of enjoyment reported by the participants. These sources were: perceptions of competence, positive social experiences, physical fitness, cognitive aspects and emotional aspects. The calculation of the number of participants who made comments in each of the clusters is provided in Table 3 in order to gain insight into how common each source of enjoyment was among the participants.

TABLE 2. THE SOURCES OF ENJOYMENT IN SPORT AS REPORTED BY SPORTSMEN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Clusters (n=20)	Categories (n=12)	Themes (n=5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the challenge of strong competition • Winning • Learning new skills • Improving over past performances 	<p><i>Feelings of Achievement</i></p> <p><i>Feelings of Improvement</i></p>	<p><i>PERCEPTIONS of COMPETENCE</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting teammates • Getting support from teammates • Seeing old friends again • Making new friends • Feeling spectator support 	<p><i>Camaraderie</i></p> <p><i>Friendships</i></p> <p><i>Spectator Support</i></p>	<p><i>POSITIVE SOCIAL EXPERIENCES</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following a demanding practice routine • Exercising hard • Feeling healthy • Getting/staying fit 	<p><i>Physical Challenge</i></p> <p><i>Health</i></p>	<p><i>PHYSICAL FITNESS</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking & concentration • Outwitting opponents • Putting pressure on opponents • Learning about my sport 	<p><i>Tactics & Strategy</i></p> <p><i>Psychological Tactics</i></p> <p><i>Knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>COGNITIVE ASPECTS</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering my best • Knowing I gave 100% • Releasing tensions & frustrations 	<p><i>Self-knowledge</i></p> <p><i>Catharsis</i></p>	<p><i>EMOTIONAL ASPECTS</i></p>

**TABLE 3. RANKING OF THE CLUSTERS OF SOURCES OF ENJOYMENT
ACCORDING TO THE FREQUENCY OF SUBJECTS' COMMENTS**

Ranking according to number of subjects (N=20)
Making comments categorized within each cluster

1. Winning (18 subjects)
2. Releasing tensions & frustrations (17 subjects)
3. Getting/Staying fit (16 subjects)
4. Seeing old friends again (15 subjects)
5. Meeting challenge of competition (14 subjects)
 - Making new friends (14 subjects)
6. Knowing I gave 100% (13 subjects)
 - Exercising hard (13 subjects)
7. Getting support from teammates (12 subjects)
8. Improving over past performances (11 subjects)
9. Learning new skills (9 subjects)
10. Supporting teammates (8 subjects)
 - Demanding practice routines (8 subjects)
11. Feeling healthy (7 subjects)
 - Discovering my best (7 subjects)
12. Learning more about my sport (6 subjects)
13. Thinking & concentration (5 subjects)
14. Outwitting opponents (4 subjects)
15. Feeling spectator support (3 subjects)
 - Putting pressure on opponents (3 subjects)

Perceptions of competence

Two general categories of meaning were identified under the broad theme of perceptions of competence: *feelings of achievement* and *feelings of improvement*. Feelings of achievement included one cluster of comments related to the enjoyment of “meeting the challenge of strong competition” and a second cluster of comments related to the enjoyment experienced with “winning”. “Meeting the challenge of strong competition” was supported by comments made by 14 subjects. According to one swimmer, “I would say for me it is enjoyable to be able to take part and compete against a really tough opponent”. Feelings associated with “winning” were mentioned by 18 subjects. A goalball player shared, “I would say that a guy plays to win. When you win, then you feel happy”.

The inclusion of “meeting challenges” and “winning” in the same category of meaning (*feelings of achievement*) may reflect the athletes’ having both process and product goals in their sport. It also can be noted that *feelings of achievement* and *feelings of improvement* are the sources for perceptions of competence. Under the category of *feelings of improvement* included a cluster of comments related to “learning new skills” and a cluster related to “improving over past performances”. The cluster “learning new skills” included comments from nine subjects: “I want to improve my distances and improve my times - to achieve”, said a sprinter. Support for the cluster “improving over past performances,” was provided by 11 subjects. A field athlete shared, “What gives me enjoyment? It is in the competitions - that you are a little better each year”. These relationships are consistent with Harter’s (1981) premise that success in meeting challenges is a source of perceptions of competence. As one of the long jumpers commented, “I love strong competition - the challenge of it - to work for everything. To win such a competition is a wonderful experience”.

Positive social experiences

Three general categories of meaning were identified under the broad theme of positive social experiences: *camaraderie*, *friendships*, and *spectator support*. *Camaraderie* included one cluster of comments related to “supporting teammates” and a second cluster related to “getting support from teammates”. “Supporting teammates” was comprised of comments from eight subjects. From a goalball player:

“I enjoy being part of a team. When you take part in a team sport, you have to get to know your teammates and they must get to know you. You know exactly how that person feels in the end - without his telling you that he feels bad, you know he feels bad - and then you can help him.”

“Getting support from teammates” was supported by comments from 12 subjects. “The best part is when you are down”, remarked a goalball player. “Your teammates really help you, and that feels great”.

Under the general category of *friendships* were clusters related to the enjoyment experienced through the opportunities provided by sport to “see old friends” as well as to “make new friends”. The cluster “seeing old friends” was supported by comments from 15 subjects. “I think it is the coming together of people. We have competition after competition, but at the end all of the people are still friends,” said one of the swimmers. The cluster “making new friends” was supported by comments from 14 subjects. “It is the socialising with one another”, said one subject. “You talk to one another and get to know one another”. According to one of the track and field athletes:

“Well, friendship is the thing. You build up a very good relationship with the other guys. Even if you do compete against each other, after the game it doesn’t matter. Whether you win or lose, you help each other - and that’s how you make friends.”

The category of *spectator support* was comprised of only one cluster of comments: “feeling spectator support” received comments from three subjects. “When the people cheer for you, it is really exciting. It feels like they are telling you are special. I like that”, said one of the swimmers.

Physical fitness

Two general categories of meaning were identified under the broad theme of physical fitness: *Physical challenge* and *health*. *Physical challenge* included one cluster of comments that referred to following a demanding practice routine and a second cluster related to exercising hard. “Following a demanding practice routine” received comments from eight subjects. According to one of the swimmers: “I like to feel pushed. I know that may sound funny to say I enjoy practices, but it is liked being stretched. You feel somehow bigger after its over”.

Enjoyment from feelings of “exercising hard” received comments from 13 subjects: The following two comments came from the same subject:

“You feel relaxed afterwards, and you feel good because you worked hard.”

“I enjoy a hard practice session - it is the relaxation of it. It is good to get tired. It is an elated feeling - the sweat and the exertion.”

The category of *health* included one cluster of comments about “feeling healthy” and a second cluster about “getting and staying fit.” “Feeling healthy” received comments from seven subjects. Two of the goalball players shared their perceptions:

“I am mad about sweating when I do my sport. I feel the dirt and the poisons are worked out of my body.”

“I enjoy pushing myself. It makes me feel healthy. I think everyone enjoys feeling like they are doing something for their health.”

A cluster of comments associated with “getting/staying fit” received comments from 16 different subjects, including this one about sport participation:

“You get fit, and when you are fit, you feel good. Your standard of life is much higher if you are fit, and you can become fit only if you practice hard.”

Cognitive aspects

Three general categories of meaning were identified under the broad theme of cognitive aspects: *Tactics and strategy*, *psychological tactics*, and *knowledge*. *Tactics and strategy* included one cluster of comments about “thinking and concentration” and a second cluster regarding “outwitting one’s opponents”. The cluster “thinking and concentration” was supported by comments from five subjects.

“It (goalball) is a sport that gives you lots of intellectual exercise because you have to think and concentrate all the time. So it is not just the physical activity I enjoy.”

The cluster “outwitting opponents” was comprised of comments from four subjects. A goalball player shared:

“The whole competition is enjoyable to me because it is competition. You make yourself count. You use that which you have practiced and studied to outwit your opponents.”

The only cluster for the category psychological tactics was that of “putting pressure on opponents”, which was comprised of comments from three subjects. Again from goalball players:

“I love it when a guy thinks you are going to one thing, then you do another thing. It is not that you make a fool out of him or anything, but it is great to make the other guy sweat...maybe find a way to make him nervous.”

“To score goals you must try to exploit your opponents’ mistakes - you must look for their weak points.”

In the category *knowledge*, “learning about my sport” received comments from six subjects.

“There is so much to know about swimming - the training, the competitions. I just love to think about swimming and all the races. Every year I learn more and more, which brings me a lot of pleasure.”

Emotional aspects

Two general categories of meaning were identified under the broad theme of emotional aspects: *Self-knowledge* and *catharsis*. *Self-knowledge* include one cluster of comments related to feelings of “discovering my best” and a second of cluster of “knowing I gave 100%”. “Discovering my best” received comments from seven subjects. According to one of the runners:

“I like to go and go and go until I am tired, where I can find out what my limits are. It really amazes me how much I can do - sport has shown me that.”

The other cluster in this category, “knowing I gave 100%”, received comments from 13 subjects. Those comments included this one from a swimmer:

“If I don’t win, I need to know that I tried my best. I want to reach my peak. If I have lost, I know the other guy was better than I am. I like to know that I am pushing my maximum.”

The category of *catharsis* was comprised of a single cluster of comments related to “releasing tensions and frustrations”. This cluster was comprised of comments from 17 subjects. “I think because any person has frustrations and a few problems, it gives me an escape”, said a goalball competitor. “I can vent my frustrations when I play”.

DISCUSSION

Because this research project followed the research methodology of the Scanlan *et al.* (1989b) study of the sources of enjoyment of former elite figure skaters, it is of interest to compare the themes and categories identified in the two studies. In the Scanlan *et al.* (1989a) analysis, the general themes of perceived competence, social and life opportunities, social recognition of competence, the act of skating, and special cases were identified. In this study, perceptions of competence and the social opportunities offered by sport involvement were also identified as sources of enjoyment by sportsmen with visual impairments. However, the major theme of social recognition identified by the skaters received considerably less attention by the sportsmen with visual impairments, being mentioned by only three of the 20 subjects. This could be because sport for individuals with disabilities in South Africa does not generally attract a large audience, so the feelings experienced in relation to spectators may not be common.

The feelings associated by the skaters with the act of skating were of an aesthetic and ascetic nature. The physical sensations discussed in the category of physical challenge (following a demanding practice and exercising hard) could be similar to the ascetic experience as a source of enjoyment mentioned by the skaters. Perhaps because the weekly training schedule of skaters was five to six hours per day, six days a week, for a minimum of five years, they had had the opportunity to develop their skills to the point that the aesthetic aspects of performance emerged for them. The sportsmen with visual impairments who participated in this study had practiced an average of two hours per session, two sessions per week, over the past five years. This may not be sufficient investment of time and energy to cultivate the aesthetic aspects of participation. It must also be noted that skating is focused on developing aesthetic aspects, while goalball, swimming and track and field are all product-oriented performances that are instrumental in focus. The skaters' theme of special cases included the enjoyment of skating as an opportunity to escape from life's problems and to feel competent in some arena of life. These sources of enjoyment also were relevant for the sportsmen with visual impairments and were grouped under the categories of catharsis and feelings of achievement.

Although a perfect fit would not be expected between any two studies on the sources of enjoyment from different sports participants or even from different sports, it is interesting to compare the results of this study with research on other individuals with disabilities. When compared to the Cooper *et al.* (1986) study of athletes with cerebral palsy, similarities are noted in the identification of health and fitness and the social experience of interacting with opponents, teammates and friends as valued aspects of sport participation.

In looking at the themes, categories and clusters of sources of enjoyment that emerged from this study, it is important to note that there is no way of determining which source is more important than another. Frequency of comments made by a single subject could mean that the focus is very important to him, but it could also mean that it is a focus that is easy to discuss. The number of subjects who make one or more comments relative to a certain focus could mean that it is a common source of enjoyment experienced by many competitors, but that does not establish its centrality to experiencing enjoyment. As one subject summarised at the end of his interview:

“To be absolutely honest, there are two important points for me and they are, first to take part...participation for my pleasure. I am mad about competing

against someone. And secondly which many people will agree with, I enjoy playing because you have to use your strength...and then you get rid of your frustrations. When you have finished playing hard, you feel much better, like a person who has cried after being heart sore.”

In this study, comments related to winning (18) releasing tensions and frustrations (17) and getting/staying fit (16) were discussed in the most detail by the greatest number of subjects. These clusters were grouped under the themes of perceptions of competence and physical fitness. It could be concluded that if coaches want to promote involvement in competitive sport for persons with visual impairments, they should include developing the fitness and competence needed to become a winner. But “winning at all costs” is not wanted. As one swimmer with international experience expressed:

“Naturally the enjoyment lies in winning, but the most enjoyable thing is definitely to win with a good sporting spirit. Even if you lose, the sporting spirit is the most enjoyable.”

From a goalball player:

“Whether you win or lose it stays enjoyable. You have worked hard and you have tried your best. It is not always about winning; it is about the aim of the game.”

The subjects with visual impairments who participated in this study reported many of the same sources of enjoyment that have been reported by other sportspersons - both with and without disabilities. However, two emphases may indicate some unique aspects of enjoyment in sport for individuals with visual impairments. First, the importance of the cathartic value of physical competition - the release of tensions and frustrations - was apparent. Secondly, the high rankings achieved by comments related to sport as an opportunity to see old friends again (15 of 20 subjects) and to make new friends (14 of 20 subjects) indicate that the social dimension of competitive sport is critical to promoting enjoyment. One of the competitors summarized his feelings in this way:

“What is enjoyable about sport is that it takes you out of your milieu. To sit at home and do nothing - I am just trying to think what the right terms are - when we are together as a group, it doesn't matter so much (what we do), if we can just be together and talk.”

As with all forms of sport, sport for individuals with visual impairments deals with the whole person. Efforts to cultivate sport commitment must maximise participant opportunities to experience enjoyment. From the results of this study, we can conclude that consideration must be given to developing levels of competence and fitness required to allow individuals the chance to win. Opportunities to work hard and to be challenged both physically and mentally were also part of enjoyment. The cathartic potential of rigorous sport experiences also deserves special attention when coaching individuals with visual impairments. The need to release the tensions and frustrations they experience as part of their sensory impairment may find a positive and satisfying expression in sport. Finally, the social dimension of participation must be accounted for when providing sport opportunities. Sharing activities and making

friends with other individuals with visual impairments is an aspect of sport that appears to make a critical contribution to feelings of enjoyment in sport.

It is hoped, through research efforts such as this one, that coaches will realise that sportspersons with visual impairments are excited about working hard and winning when they compete, and find enjoyment in meeting the physical and cognitive challenges of competition. But these sportspersons are also complex individuals who have needs that extend into the emotional and social dimensions of sport as well. In order to develop the levels of commitment and sustained involvement needed to derive the full benefits from sport, coaches must develop programmes and utilise strategies sensitive to the multidimensional nature of participant enjoyment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The financial assistance of the Center for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the authors and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Center for Science Development.

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(Subject editor: Prof. M.F. Coetsee)

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