

# Webinar

## Researching disability: Methodological challenges and possibilities



Peter Downs



Hayley Fitzgerald



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# **Researching disability: Methodological challenges and possibilities**

Hayley Fitzgerald



## About me:

- Gateway Clubs, Yorkshire Federation Disability Sport, Bradford Disability Sport, Bradford College
- Special School Governor
- PhD: Young disabled people, PE and sport
- Researcher at Loughborough University



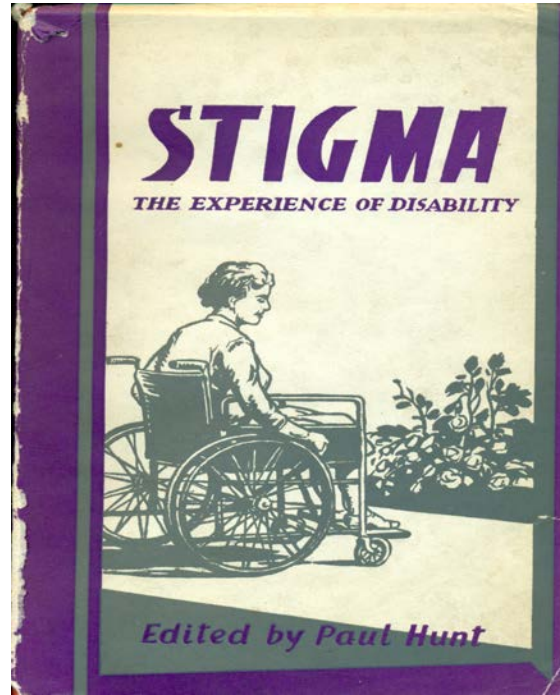
Visiting Professor Disability Sport (University of Worcester)  
Reader (Leeds Beckett University)

### Contact

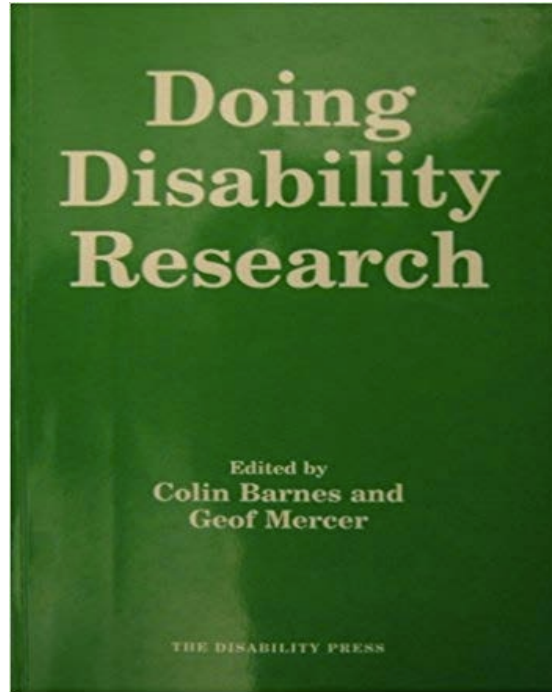
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Hunt (1966) *Stigma the Experience of Disability*



Barnes & Mercer (1997) *Doing Disability Research*

“We were throwing the rugby ball around, demonstrating swim strokes and throwing darts, joking about getting a horse into the room, chanting football songs. I felt like an entertainer not an interviewer.” (Hayley)

“I spent one afternoon for three weeks putting the display up at the school and in between this about four days preparing the individual displays. I wonder how many researchers in schools bother to do this?” (Hayley)



“I want them to know how I get on in PE. I want them to know I like it. I want them to know I do it a lot. I’m glad my picture is like famous now.” (Mary)

Fitzgerald, H. (2012) “Drawing” on disabled students’ experiences of physical education and stakeholder responses’, *Sport, Education and Society* 17 (4): 443-462.



## Questions of Inclusion

How can we support young people, like Mary, to be motivated, competent and knowledgeable about themselves and physical activity?

How can we support young people, like Mary, to feel included in our research activities?



# Today ....

1. Explore how understandings of disability inform research with people with disabilities.
2. Understand the principles of inclusive and emancipatory research.
3. Highlight different methods for researching with people with disabilities.



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# (1) Understandings of disability and researching with disabled people

“To be admitted to one of these institutions is to enter a kind of limbo in which one has been **written off as a member of society** but is not yet physically dead. In these terms, the task that society assigns – behaviourally though never verbally – to these institutions is to cater for the socially dead during the interval between social death and physical death.”



Miller, E. J., & Gwynne, G. V. (1972) *A Life Apart. A pilot study of residential institutions for the physically handicapped and the young chronic sick*. London: Tavistock Publications. (p. 80)

“She’s bad ill with that” (Julie)

“Honestly my gut reaction is yuck, yuck” (Mick)

“They couldn’t come to our school” (Adam)

“There’s no way they’d get a girlfriend” (Robin)

“Do any of them have jobs? Like there are loads they couldn’t do, so that’s a big problem” (Sam)

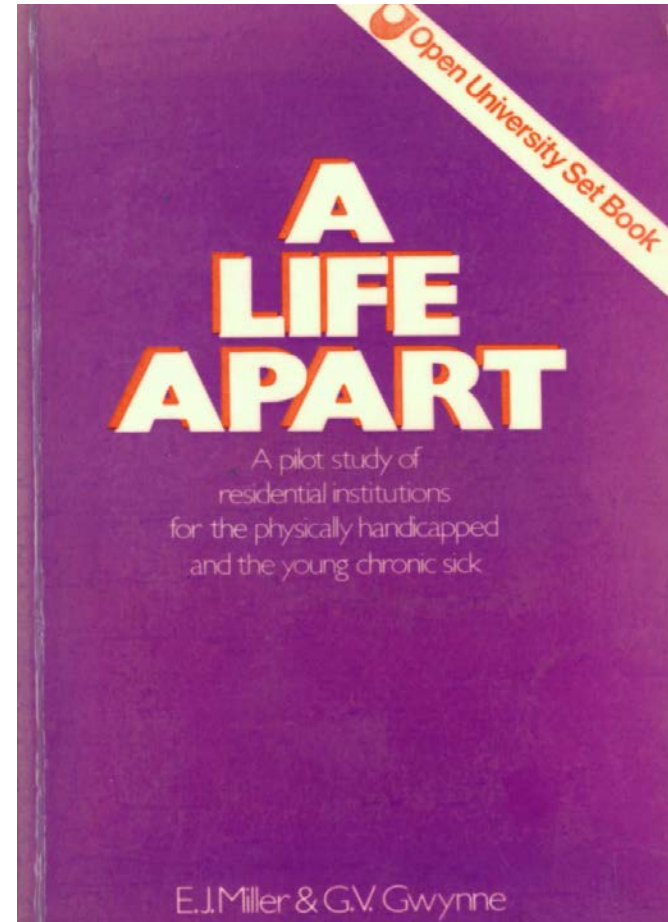
“To most in our field ... The object of our study is the body or specific aspects of the performing body, but traditionally our study has not focused on the body as whole, the body in a social context, or the body in connection with self.”

DePauw, K. P. (1997) ‘The (In)Visability of DisAbility: cultural contexts and “sporting bodies”’, *Quest*, 49 (4): 416–430.



Hunt (1981) labelled the researchers, Miller and Gwynne, as 'parasite people'

- Researchers were on the side of the oppressors.
- Interested in their own research careers.
- Exploiting people with disabilities.





- What knowledge is produced (and valued) in sport about people with disabilities?



Fitzgerald, H. (2009) 'Are you a 'parasite researcher'? Researching with young disabled people' in H. Fitzgerald (Ed.) *Disability and Youth Sport*. Routledge: London.



- How are people with disabilities part of the research process?



- How do we go about researching to produce knowledge?



Stride, A. & Fitzgerald, H. (2017) 'Working towards social justice through participatory research with young people in sport and leisure' in Long, J.; Watson, B. & Fletcher, T. (Eds.) *Sport, Leisure and Social Justice*. Routledge: London.

# Why isn't there much research with young disabled people (in PE and youth sport)

First and foremost we need to ask PE teachers, support staff and parents.



# Why isn't there much research with young disabled people (in PE and youth sport)

Some young people with disabilities may not be able to respond to questionnaires, interviews and other data collection tools.



# Why isn't there much research with young disabled people (in PE and youth sport)

(PE and youth sport) researchers focus on other important areas and disability related research is not central to improving experiences for all students.





# Why isn't there much research with young disabled people (in PE and youth sport)

Now lets critically consider these three issues:

- Asking others (PE teachers, support staff and parents)
- Not able complete questionnaires and interviews
- Other important areas to research



“The meeting that took place was completely ordinary – what was extraordinary was the fact that neither of the young men had previously had such an opportunity. The occasion rendered undeniably visible the fact that the preoccupations of these two young men were similar to those of the majority of young people – friendships, music, education, exams, future prospects – in spite of their particular experience of exclusion. In many ways, their methods of communication added to the depth of the dialogue as each word spelled out took great effort and was therefore carefully considered”.

Murray, P (2002) *Hello! Are you Listening? Disabled teenagers' experience of access to inclusive leisure*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York.

# Today ....

1. Explore how understandings of disability inform research with people with disabilities.
2. **Understand the principles of inclusive research.**
3. Highlight different methods for researching with people with disabilities.





## (2) Inclusive research

- Increasing concerns to elicit student voice in education, consult in community settings and to engage young people (with disabilities) in research.
- Buoyant debates and ‘specialist’ texts in PE and youth sport
- Wider debate within inclusive education, childhood studies and disability studies.



O'Sullivan, M. & MacPhail, A. (Eds.) (2010) *Young People's Voices in Physical Education and Youth Sport*, Routledge: London.

Dowling, F., Fitzgerald, H. & Flintoff, A. (2012) (Eds.) *Equity and Difference in PE, Sport and Health: A Narrative Approach*. Routledge: London.

# Key features of inclusive research

The research question, problem or issue must be one that is **owned** (though not necessarily initiated) by people with disabilities.



Adapted from: Walmsley, J., & Johnson, K. (2003) *Inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities. Past, present and futures*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

# Key features of inclusive research

It should further the interests of people with disabilities and non-disabled **researchers** should be on the side of people with disabilities.



Adapted from: Walmsley, J., & Johnson, K. (2003) *Inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities. Past, present and futures*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

# Key features of inclusive research

It should be **collaborative** and people with disabilities should be involved in the process of doing the research.



Adapted from: Walmsley, J., & Johnson, K. (2003) *Inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities. Past, present and futures*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

# Key features of inclusive research

The research question, process and reports must be **accessible** to people with disabilities.



Adapted from: Walmsley, J., & Johnson, K. (2003) *Inclusive research with people with intellectual disabilities. Past, present and futures*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

# Today ....

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### (3) Methods for researching with disabled people

## TOP Tip 1: It's not all about journals

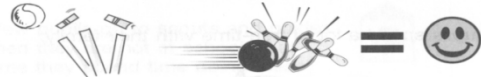
Fitzgerald, H. (2009) 'Are you a 'parasite researcher'? Researching with young disabled people' in H. Fitzgerald (Ed.) *Disability and Youth Sport*. Routledge: London.

Picture this! Student co-researchers 111


- Some pupils enjoy PE and sport and some dislike it.




- Table cricket and bowling were rated the best PE activities.



- Parachute games and 'thinking' games were rated the worst PE activities.








- Doing PE and sport helps to show other people that we can do a lot of things.



## TOP TIP 2:

Don't assume everyone can best access your questionnaire in a written format

<b>swimming</b> 	<b>good</b> 	<b>all right</b> 	<b>bad</b> 	<b>don't know</b> 
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Caution: avoid 'smiley face syndrome'





## **TOP TIP 3:**

Think of interviews as something more than verbalised responses

- signed through an interpreter
- use pictured Makaton symbol or book
- use electronic communication technology

## TOP TIP 4:

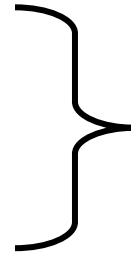
Think outside the box & be creative

For example:

Using disposable cameras

Drawings

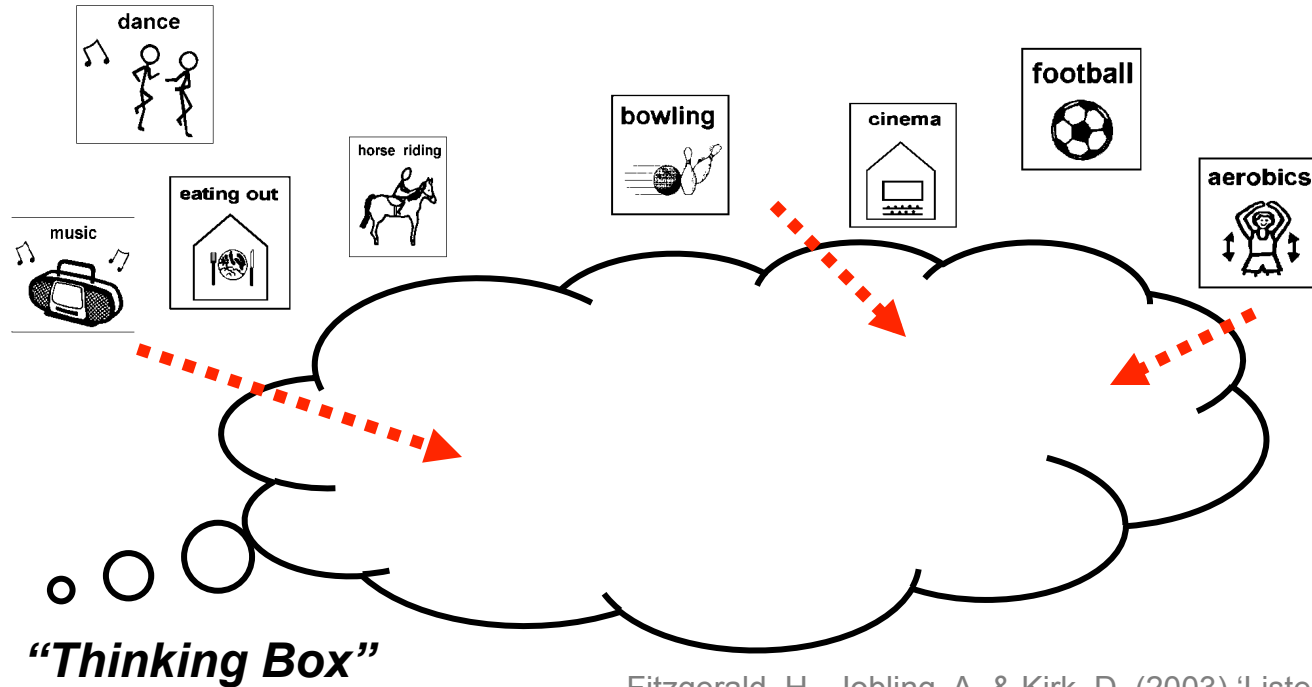
Visual images



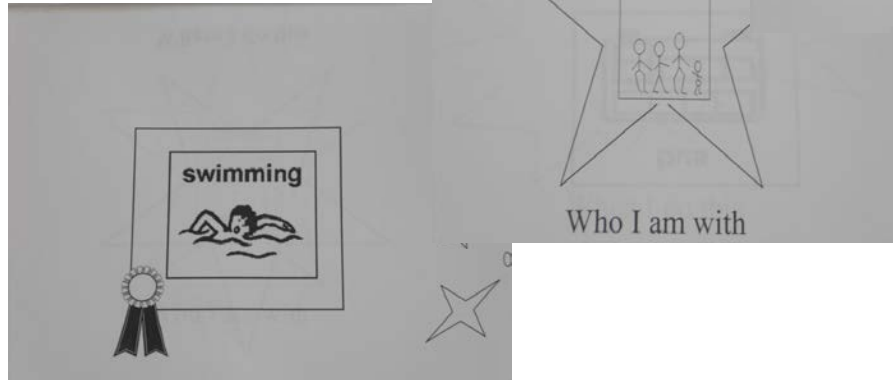
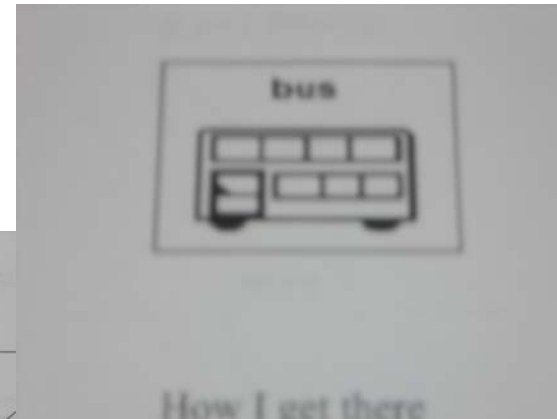
To stimulate  
exchanges

Try to work collaboratively with teachers, support staff & disabled people to ensure the strategy you use is accessible .....

# TOP TIP 5: Work collaboratively



Fitzgerald, H., Jobling, A. & Kirk, D. (2003) 'Listening to the 'voices' of students with severe learning difficulties through a task-based approach to research and learning in physical education', *British Journal of Learning Support* 18 (3): 123-129.



Fitzgerald, H., Stride, A. & Jobling, A. (2012) 'Inclusivity and research - Capturing the lived experiences of young people with disabilities' in D. Moore, A. Gorra, J. Reaney & H. Smith (Eds.) *Disabled Students in Education: Technology, Transition and Inclusivity*. IGI: London.

# TOP TIP 6: Involvement in the research

## Working with young people with disabilities as co-researchers

### A Reminder:

#### Inclusive research

- Ownership of research problem
- On the side of disabled people
- Collaborative
- Accessible

Fitzgerald, H., Jobling, A. & Kirk D. (2003) 'Valuing the Voices of Young Disabled People: Exploring Experiences of Physical Education and Sport', *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy* 8 (1): 175-201.

- Change of direction
- Adaptability
- Winging it

# You and your research

Have you considered including people with disabilities in your study?



# You and your research

Does your research exclude people with disabilities from your research?





# You and your research

How can you make your research more accessible?



# Thanks

Recording will be available in a week or so on The Inclusion Club



Peter Downs



Hayley Fitzgerald



Ken Black