Session 7D
Politics, Policy, and Participation: Physical Activity and Sport Perspectives from China, Israel and USA
Session Organizer: Program Committee
Session Presider: Daniel Burdsey, University of Brighton

7D Keqiang Cao, Shanghai University of Sport; Lin Yu, Shanghai University of Sport & Hanhan Xue, Florida State University
“Sport as Lifestyle Choice and Consumption: The Trends of Chinese Sport Participation”

Recent years have seen significant structural changes in China’s sport “most notably in the continued growth in residents’ participation in sport, fitness, recreation, and physical activities. According to the 2014 National Fitness Survey, the number of Chinese urban and rural residents who participate in physical exercise was 400 million and the percentage of those who regularly participate in sport and physical activities reached 33.9% in 2014, significantly higher than the year of 2007 (General Administration of Sports of China, 2015). Further evidenced by the launch of the state policy documents, “National Fitness Program” (2011-15) and Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption, sport for all, instead of elite Olympic sport, has obviously become a “national strategy” in China (Sun, 2016, para. 10). “Sports participation has become an emerging life necessity of urban Chinese people after food, clothing, and housing,” as a Chinese sport official pointed out (Sun, 2016, para. 29). In this study, we thus seek to look at how and why the role and status of sport participation has shifted in China, based on policy and government documents analysis. In so doing, we could further understand the transition and transformation of sport in China in the context of state-led capitalism – more specifically, the trends toward the marketization of the political and cultural economies of the Chinese sport system.

7D Daniel Burdsey, University of Brighton
“Physical Culture and Age(ing) in South Asian Communities in the United Kingdom”

Over recent decades, research has increasingly explored the sporting and physical cultural experiences of young South Asians. Sociological analyses (including my own work) have framed these phenomena around issues of identity and integration, referring to hybridity, diaspora and citizenship. However, this work has not addressed the experiences of the parents and grandparents of these young people. Participation in physical cultural activities may hold different meanings for older diasporic South Asians, such as health and well-being, sociability and the celebration of tradition. Yet, their experiences are largely “invisible” and “inaudible” outside their communities. Marginalised due to both ethnicity and age, they are overlooked in policy initiatives and ignored in academic research: emerging work on physical activity and the lifecycle has largely disregarded the experiences of racialised groups; while more established research on race and ageing underplays the role of physical culture. This exploratory paper calls for the sociology of sport to take the intersections between race and age(ing) seriously, and to consider the experiences of older minority ethnic participants in physical cultural activities. In line with this year’s conference theme, it also considers how practices of research with older members of racialised groups can be relevant, empowering, accountable and socially just.

7D Bonnie Everhart, ThinkBig, LLC
“Stepping Out: Exploring Recreational Walking and Social Change in Israel”

Different subcultures in Israel lead separate lifestyles in order to maintain their cultural, religious, or ethnic identities. The pluralistic way of life reasons that conflict and dialogue results in ostensibly-common good and builds on a social environment in which concerns of diverse views on life and beliefs can be led broadly toward everyone’s advantage (Pittinsky, Ratcliff, Maruskin, 2008). Within these social norms, the idea of routine neighborhood walking and walking as a health enhancing activity formally began in Israel.
in the late 1980s through community recreation centers. This study explored participation in recreational walking beyond its fitness qualities to its plausible use as a community relationship tool. Social divides undermine cohesive relationship building in communities broken by conflict and distrust. The use of sport as a change agent is aligned with the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) which underscores that human behavior is caused by personal, behavioral and environmental influences. Additionally, the study explored social values as an essential component in understanding culture within diverse communities. The aim of the presentation is to encourage future research that would contribute to the practice and development of recreational walking as a health enhancing physical activity coinciding as a positive relationship builder among diverse communities.

7D Matt Moore, Ball State University and National Association of Social Workers in Sports
“Sport Social Work: A Holistic Approach to Promoting Athlete Functioning”

College athletes are a vulnerable population, who experience a range of biopsychosocial challenges. Current literature examining psychosocial risks of athletes correlates athletic participation with high levels of depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts (Cox, 2015; Rao & Hong, 2015; Wolanin et al., 2015), alcohol use (Druckman, Gilli, Klar, & Robinson, 2015; NCAA, 2015), illicit substance use (including performance enhancers) (NCAA, 2013), the development of eating disorders (McLester, Hardin, & Hoppe, 2014), and lower levels of overall well-being (Watson & Kissinger, 2007). Adopting a social work perspective in an effort to help athletes overcome these risk factors is an emerging idea. Social Workers strive to ensure the dignity and worth of individual athletes, to empower athletes to seek self-determination, and to emphasize athlete strengths as global citizens and not just as athletes. Sport Social Work models embrace theories of development and sociology, models of direct practice, and social policy and research reform. This presentation will review the challenges facing athletes and how the social work profession can promote the well-being and functioning of athletes. In particular, how social workers can help athletes transition into and out of athletics, address needs through direct services, and advocate for athletes’ rights through grassroots efforts.

7D Louise Mansfield, Brunel University London & Tess Kay, Brunel University London
“Compromised? Co-production of knowledge in community sport for public health partnerships”

This paper critically examines the significance of co-production in a collaborative research-policy-practice partnership which aimed to design, deliver and evaluate a Health and Sport Engagement (HASE) Programme in local community contexts. The paper identifies the role of academic researchers, local and national policy makers, local authority commissioners and managers, service delivery professionals and public participants in challenging the existing hierarchy of evidence and the status of public intellectuals in public health. I argue that informed community sport policy requires an approach to knowledge and understanding that is underpinned by research-practice alliances that capture and reflect everyday realities through qualitative methods. The intention in this discussion is to propose the idea that the role of the publicly engaged sociologist in the public health domain must be concerned with reflecting on and committing to the difficult public work that arises when professional, critical, policy and public knowledge collides.