

Locating Sport and Recreation in Rural Community Development

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Purpose

- Examine the perceived outcomes of sport and recreation in and for the community.
- Discuss the complexities of using sport and recreation as a means of community developent in rural contexts.





Background

- In rural contexts, sport and recreation are implicated in:
 - Sense of community (Atherly, 2006)
 - Restructuring (Oncescu, 2015)
 - Social Capital (Spaaij, 2009; Tonts, 2005)
 - Physical and Mental Health (Leipert et.al, 2011)

Methodology

- Participatory action research project with the municipal recreation committee:
 - Semi-structured interviews (n=40)
 - Participant Observation
 - Policy making, programming, and community events



Context

- "Bedroom" community of ~3200.
- Amalgamated to incorporate two distinct town centres and the outlying township.
 - Political tensions.
 - Surplus of facilities.
 - Recent developments.

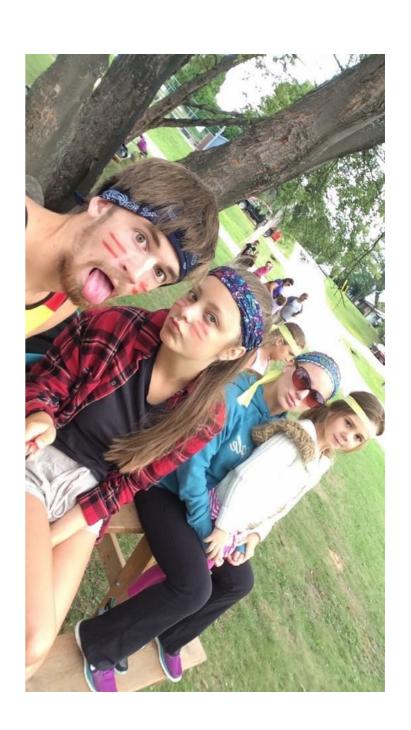




Results

- Economic/tourism development
- Sense of community/pride
- Social inclusion/networking





Economic/Tourism Development

"the local area gets an injection of cash that they wouldn't have otherwise"



Sense of Community/Pride

"something to be proud of"



"brings people together and you know for one objective...Roll up the sleeves and work together"

Social Inclusion/Networking



"you have a step back...if you're a new person...you have to work yourself in"



Discussion

- A diversity of outcomes can be perceived from sport and recreation.
- Policy making relies on optimistic expectations and narratives of outcomes with little evaluation.





Discussion

- Understandings of socio-cultural histories within the community, particularly those based on familybased identities, were prominent in experiences of sport and recreation.
- New technology enhances "evidence," but not necessarily the capacity to make "evidencedbased" decisions and policy.



Implications

- Sport and recreation are understood to be important community activities which are enthusiastically endorsed by community members.
- While sport and recreation appear to be an effective means of generative community development outcomes, rural communities may require support in order to strategically, effectively, and inclusively manage these activities.



Thanks

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