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## **“Mzungu!” : Implications of Identity, Role Formation and Programme Delivery in the Sport for Development Movement**

### **ABSTRACT**

Prevailing academic notions regarding Sport-for-Development-and-Peace (SDP) programmes advocate a ‘transformative vision’ that is hoped to convert the movement from a ‘damaging’ development practice, to one which fulfils its potential and elicits benefits worldwide. Volunteers are perceived to be a fundamental element of this transformative vision. This paper provides insight into the voluntary experience of the SDP movement, placing particular attention towards notions of self, the (re)construction of identity and its impact upon the delivery of a developmental initiative located within a Zambian community. Utilising an interactionist perspective, the paper identifies three related themes which collectively represent the experiential landscape across which participant views were aired—preconceptions and effect on identity and behaviour; experiences and effect on identity and behaviour; and responses to experiences of identity disruption. Following analysis of these themes, the paper finds that SDP programmes may be enhanced through increased transparency of communication in relation to the role of the volunteer to limit preconceptions and expectations associated with the programme and enable volunteers to arrive in the field better equipped to respond to the challenges of the role.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Linked under the banner of Sport-for-Development-and-Peace (SDP), government initiatives and programmes run by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and national/international sports organizations utilise sport as a tool for achieving developmental goals within impoverished and disadvantaged communities (Darnell 2007, 2010, 2012; Kidd 2008). Pioneered by the United Nations (UN), the SDP movement is increasingly regarded as a cost-effective tool with which to speed up the achievement of core directives associated with the Millennium Development Goals (Darnell 2010; Beutler

2008; Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group [SDPIWG] 2008). Indeed, the SDPIWG document; *Harnessing the Power of Sport for Development and Peace: Recommendations for Governments*, and the UN's Sport for Development and Peace annual report (UNOSDP 2013), highlights the various ways in which sporting initiatives can address issues of health, education, gender empowerment, social inclusion, conflict prevention and peace building (SDPIWG 2008). Consequently, the use of sport as a tool to address issues associated with global inequality and conflict has been justified through highlighting the potential benefits associated with fostering local and community agency; developing social capital for individuals and communities; catalysing social inclusion amongst ethnically diverse communities; combatting the spread of HIV/AIDS and advancing global partnerships for development (Beutler 2008; Burnett 2006; Fokwang 2009; Sugden and Wallis 2007; Vermeulen and Verweel 2009). Regarded as a response to the initial failings of previous development programmes, sport is thus seen to provide a 'global language' (Tiessen 2011) that can overcome social barriers and reach communities across the world in ways that politicians, multilateral agencies and NGOs fail to realise (Black 2010; Levermore 2008; Levermore and Beacom 2008).

Despite recognition of the positive outcomes surrounding such initiatives, criticism focused upon the use of sport to pursue developmental means beyond its own sector pays heed to the lack of 'tangible' evidence and idealistic nature that encompasses SDP programmes (Bloyce and Smith 2010; Coalter 2007; 2010; Guest 2009; Spaaij 2009). However, as all SDP initiatives are situated amongst a broader societal context containing influencers that impact upon the experiences and perceived benefits of those engaged with such developmental projects, it becomes increasingly difficult to locate the positive impact of sport-related programmes (Coalter 2007). Further critical consideration surrounding the delivery of SDP focuses upon the application of postcolonial theory, pursuing the proposition that developmental interventions are guided by knowledge acquired and imparted from a single narrative, namely that of the global Northern perspectives and colonial powers (Darnell 2007). Therefore, SDP initiatives implemented in the global South are directed by a discourse emanating from privileged positions located amongst global Northern partners, a networked infrastructure that imposes as sense of domination over those marginalised groups residing in the global South (Darnell 2007; Mwaanga 2013; Sampson 2002).

Moreover, practical limitations of SDP have highlighted the poor dialogue that exists between those delivering on SDP programmes and those residing in disadvantaged communities, calling for a greater understanding of what are very different worlds (Armstrong 2004; Giulianotti 2004 2011a; Beacom and Levermore 2008).

Recent work examining SDP has deployed frameworks that pursue Foucauldian notions of bio-power, Gramscian theories of hegemony and postcolonial theory to delineate a clearer appreciation of the structural negotiations that exist between sport, politics and culture, identifying the impact that such relations impose upon the articulation and delivery of policy processes located within the field of SDP (Black 2010; Darnell 2010, 2011, 2012; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011; Levermore and Beacom 2012; Hayhurst 2009; Tiessen 2011). Whilst such work provides invaluable critique for exposing the dominant power relations and structural imperatives that guide practices within SPD programmes, few studies pursue a line of examination that expose the beliefs, values and meanings through which practitioners make sense of their experiences. Such thinking resonates with Coalter's (2007) assertion that the monitoring and evaluation of SDP initiatives should involve the personnel of the programmes to elicit a broader understanding of how the SDP movement contributes to, and impacts upon, the communities in which they are implemented. In response to this assertion, this paper intends to build upon recent autoethnographic insight into the SDP sector that has provided critical reflection upon the 'everyday experience' of the volunteer (Forde 2013).

Therefore, and in support of such positions, our paper attempts to capture the voice of the volunteer to articulate concerns surrounding the delivery and implementation of SDP initiatives. This article draws upon research conducted in association with a Sport-for-Development and Peace (SDP) initiative currently operating in Zambia, Southern Africa. Amongst one of many programmes to be established in Africa the initiative provides an opportunity for British university students to fundraise and then volunteer in Zambian communities for a six week period, with the principal aim of delivering essential health awareness to local communities through the medium of sport. Additional aims associated with the programme include the reciprocal exchange of ideas and culture between UK universities and international development partners, and the professional development of staff and volunteers both from the UK and those located in the host country.

Through adopting an interactionist perspective we focus specifically upon the concepts of 'role' and 'identity' (Goffman 1990, 1961), examining how the (re)construction of self is negotiated amongst volunteers upon entering the field and interacting with the local Zambian community. In so doing, we attempt to comment upon broader issues associated with SDP objectives, outlining how perceived notions of volunteer identity impact upon the 'lived experiences' of those partaking in SDP work, shaping their attitude and thus overall involvement regarding project delivery. Thus we seek to capture the negotiations, interactions and communications that exist between the practitioner and the user, highlighting the interactive nature of policy interventions and the contested negotiations that impact upon policy articulation. Whilst the emphasis of this paper seeks to explore role formation and identity disruption through reflecting upon interactions between international volunteers and the local Zambian community, we must be mindful that contemporary conceptions of identity should not be reduced to a narrow conception of self that is solely determined by interaction between the volunteers and SDP participants. With the rapid acceleration of web 2.0 technologies, information systems have integrated the world 'in global networks of instrumentality' (Castells, 1996; 1997), a process that has led to the promotion and creation of plural identities established through on-going procedures of interaction across virtual communities. That is, the international volunteers, their conceptions of self and impression management are not bound by temporal or spatial restrictions. Those engaging in international volunteer work are increasingly connected through global networks of interaction, traversing societies full of diverse interests and establishing and re-establishing notions of self through online social media sites. Conceptions of self and identity, especially upon considering the modern tourist space, are increasingly becoming a process of social reflexivity that is attuned to the rapid acceleration of information technology, allowing for multiple interactions with a diverse range of individuals, ideas, places and space (Giddens 1991, 2006; Wearing et al 2012). Thus, such processes provide a catalyst for the creation of diverse citizenries and spatial formations that impact upon the (re)presentation of volunteer identity and narratives of self before, during and after placements have occurred (Lorimer 2010; Lyons et al 2012), an acknowledgment that must be recognised if we are to understand the contemporary nature of identity formation(s). In addition, our use of Erving Goffman's work is not to be considered independent, or substitutive of current power frameworks. Instead we pursue such

lines of theoretical analyses in an attempt to provide a complementary insight into the phenomenon of identity as experienced within the field of SDP, and encourage further debate and examination that seeks to uncover the interplay of human agency, as opposed to structure, when critically reflecting upon developmental work.

## **SDP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEER IDENTITY**

Embedded within a neoliberal discourse, SDP is said to replicate and perpetuate power relations that legitimise inequality and social hierarchy, justifying the contemporary status quo as it provides a remedy for social ills based upon an economic logic that promotes socio-political regulation at the expense of liberation (Darnell 2012; Hayhurst 2009; Li 2007). Furthermore, SDP programmes have been harnessed by nation states to reduce internal government spending on social care and health programmes, an approach to policy that reduces government responsibility for citizens in disadvantaged communities and is thus said to ignore the ‘root causes’ of poverty (Wilson and Hayhurst 2009).

Therefore, scholars have called for a re-imaging of SDP, pursuing a ‘transformative’ approach that seeks to both refine application, and in the process, re-define the broader constructs of international development and SDP’s role therein (Darnell 2012; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011). The ever popular belief—largely emanating from policy makers situated outside the academic community—that sport has the capabilities to transcend politics, power and inequality is an agenda that requires constant revision. To move towards a critically constructed vision for SDP, with particular emphasis on engaging the marginalised voices of those within local African communities, allows for an improved understanding of the processes, procedures and outcomes for developmental programmes engaged with addressing inequality (Kay 2009, 2012; Spaaij 2011). Of fundamental importance to this transformative vision is the ability to capture and (re)present the perspective of those involved with the programme. Working in relationship with aid recipients and providing the ‘on the ground’ delivery of development objectives and strategies, volunteers embody and deliver the ethos, goals and values of aid agencies, projects and NGOs. To capture the voices of those located in the field provides an apt portrayal of the micro-practices

that shape the delivery of SDP, and speaks more broadly to the impact that such initiatives maintain over local communities. The SDP volunteer thus becomes a significant contributor to the transformative vision of [sport's role in] international development and provides a crucial element concerning the development of a progressive strategy for SDP (Coalter 2007; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011; Darnell 2010, 2012).

Integral to the successful delivery of international developmental projects, volunteers are said to be able to “raise awareness of, and a commitment to, combating existing unequal power relations and deep-seated causes of poverty, injustice, and unsustainable development” (Devereux 2008, p. 358). Moreover, international volunteering has the capacity to provide tangible contributions to development through the transfer of resources, knowledge and skills a process that “...can bridge the gap between the professionalized world of development experts and organizations and the ‘non-specialized publics’ who engage with the ideas and practices of development” (Lewis 2006, p. 16). A growing body of literature has sought to examine the effects of international volunteering/volunteer tourism, placing emphasis upon intercultural competence, youth transitions and the development of cultural capital (Ansell 2008; Jones 2011; McGehee and Santos 2005; Raymond and Hall 2008; Sin 2009; Yashima 2010). In addition, those who examine volunteering and the concept of role and identity in broader societal settings pursue such lines of enquiry through deploying models of behaviour that are underpinned by a psychological framework for analyses (Grube and Piliavin 2000; Lodi-Smith and Roberts 2007; Reich 2000; Tidwell 2005). Yet research in this area, and more specifically the SDP movement, seldom acknowledges the importance of ‘self’ and the negotiation of role identity and its reflection upon the experience of the volunteer in delivering key objectives associated with established developmental programmes. What little literature focuses upon volunteerism and volunteer identity in SDP is addressed using a critical framework. In this instance volunteer identity is discussed in terms of privileged positions of power and the (re)establishment of hegemonic relations between global North/South partners (Darnell 2011; Heron 2007; Razack 2005; Tiessen 2011). Emphasis is placed upon examining issues of structure, reflecting the dominance of the neoliberal discourse that is driving the SDP movement and shaping

practices that are attributed to the social structures that underpin development and aid, sport and nationality (Darnell 2011; Tiessen 2011).

Such an approach to examining identity construction in SDP has proved valuable, drawing attention to the complexities that surround international volunteer experiences, specifically the ways in which volunteers understand their service roles and the dominant power relations that guide them. Yet to capture the essence of role behaviour we must continue to pursue a line of enquiry that examines the construction of self, not only from a structural or institutional perspective, but also at a situational level (Stebbins 1967). Little analyses focuses interpretively upon the experience of individual volunteers, their active negotiations with identity ‘on the ground’ and how they construct their own identities during their voluntary experience. Through pursuing a dramaturgical perspective of interaction (Goffman 1961, 1990) we highlight the concept of impression management and its importance in relation to social interaction, the construction of identities and the delivery of SDP work. How an individual manages their identity and the role they display becomes integral to the demonstration of a ‘performance’ that is believable, attributes must be lived out by the individual through the socialisation, interaction and presentation of ‘self’ amongst ‘role others’ (Goffman 1990). Acceptance amongst the culture in which SDP volunteers negotiate may be closely associated with how well the individual executes the desired role in the presence of significant others, located both within the local communities and also amongst peer workers. The role of SDP volunteer presents a challenging position as identity is negotiated and re-negotiated through a shifting pattern of interaction amongst individuals who possess pre-established values concerning the key agendas associated with development work. Through highlighting the tensions surrounding such interactions we seek to examine the concept of identity negotiation(s) and its impact upon shaping the ‘role’ of volunteer, their own perceptions of ‘performance’ and how this is lived out with sincerity, accuracy and in accordance with the pre-established agendas associated with the role of addressing inequality. In so doing we argue that such a position aids in portraying the contrasting and conflicting expectations of what is viewed as ‘good’ volunteer work within SDP programmes.



## **METHODOLOGY**

Guided by an interpretivist epistemology (Weber, 1969), the study sought to acquire an understanding of the volunteers' role within SDP work and how this may be negotiated, challenged and altered upon interacting with communities in the host country. The main participants for this study were four, white-British, University students (aged 19-21) who all voluntarily applied to work within a sports leadership and development exchange programme located in Zambia. These volunteers undertook a short, domestic training programme before embarking on a six week placement working for two NGOs based in Lusaka, Zambia—Sport in Action and Edusport. In addition, the study engaged one Zambian site coordinator to offer an alternative perspective on the role and expectations of contributing to the SDP initiative. Semi-structured interviews were facilitated by the third author with all participants. The participants were purposively sampled, based upon their capacity to provide insight into the research setting, the events, the process, and the actors involved in the programme (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, these individuals could elicit information rich cases to provide data with which to analyse the SDP process and the participants' experiences therein (Patton, 2002). By interpreting the participants own social experiences through the lens of an interactionist perspective, insight into the subjective experiences of the volunteers could be obtained, placing emphasis upon the shared meanings and social interaction apparent amongst volunteers and those residing in the local communities. Furthermore, access to such knowledge afforded the opportunity to critically analyse the attitudes and behaviours of the programme staff, allowing for a clearer reflection regarding the practical application and effectiveness of the initiative (Coalter, 2007). Interview data were collected and transcribed verbatim, with open coding employed to enable the data to be closely examined, dissected into discrete parts, and compared for similarities and differences (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Following further thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), a number of complex issues emerged from the data, which captured the participant perceptions of the voluntary roles that were undertaken during the programme. These issues have been organized in line with three central themes which collectively represent the experiential landscape across which participant views were

aired. More specifically, these themes comprise: (i) 'preconceptions and effect on identity and behaviour'; (ii) 'experiences and effect on identity and behaviour' and (iii) 'responses to experiences of identity disruption'.

## **PRECONCEPTIONS AND EFFECT ON IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOUR**

Prior to engaging with the SDP initiative volunteers had little information concerning the 'lived experiences' of the proposed volunteer work. This lack of knowledge thus shaped their preconceptions, or lack thereof, of what was to be expected in association with the 'role' of volunteer. Such revelations provided insight into the processes of volunteer identity construction and its importance concerning preparation upon which individuals 'lived out' their own 'performances' once engaged with the local communities. Upon discussing the concept of 'role' adoption and 'performance' Goffman (1990, p. 28) states that when an individual performs a required role they are,

Asked to believe that the character they see possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be.

Therefore, how an individual manages their identity and the role they display is integral to the demonstration of a performance that is believable. When considering the dramaturgical notion of 'role' enactment Goffman (1990) indicates that specific roles will be allocated by the director of performance in order to perpetuate the key values attached to an individual's personal 'front' via the process of socialisation. Agents ensure that the particular attitudes and attributes required to perform a desired 'role' are upheld and effectively reproduced amongst a groups' social milieu, as Goffman (1990, p. 37) indicates: "when an actor takes on an established role, usually he finds a particular front has already been established for it". Preconceptions regarding the nature of volunteering within Zambia, the requirements volunteers faced, and their identity within the field were varied as no pre-determined 'front' had been established to which volunteer workers could adhere to. Thus, notions of the programme, the work to be carried out and the 'role' of the volunteer were guided by

external sources that could not portray the ‘lived’ realities of working in the local  
Zambian community:

Jamie: You just build yourself up to things you see in the media, TV. Sport relief comes up and releases images of “Africa”...I thought we’d come from two completely different worlds and our worlds would collide effectively. That was my expectation, that we wouldn’t have a lot of middle ground to discuss.

Here the volunteers felt they had little initial understanding of what their upcoming experience would entail, yet quite clearly—and quite unintentionally—they developed idealised ‘fronts’ that would help shape, or perhaps disrupt, their practices once in the field. Whilst preconceptions concerning expectations and identity formations maybe influenced by a variety of sources (e.g. online social media), reflections upon the programme itself were made by the volunteers considering the context they would be working in, the diverse cultural climate and their sense of self once situated within a new culture. Upon reflection, preconceived notions of the volunteer role perpetuated an adherence to the hierarchical power relations and societal divides established between the global North/South (Darnell 2011, 2012; Hartmannn and Kwauk 2011; Tiessen 2011) as volunteers demonstrated an idealised vision of their role prior to engaging with the Zambian communities:

Peter: I think my expectations were that the programme was going to be really well organised....from being told about the culture and how they value white people and really look up to you.

Upon considering the notion of identity management Goffman (1961), suggests that “the performer will attempt to make the expressions that occur consistent with the identity imputed to him” (p. 99). Those who consulted with previous volunteers formed expectations of an identity that was representative of the unequal power relations dictated by a neo-imperial discourse, identifying citizens in the local Zambian community as ‘passive others’ awaiting charitable aid from the West

(Tiessen 2011), an identity that came with a somewhat elevated and privileged societal standing.

Peter: I wasn't too sure about how they would react to me, but I'd spoken to people who had been to Africa before and how crazy they were about white people. Erm, so I was kind of expecting to be a little bit of a hero maybe. I guess I kind of expected to be pointed at, and touched and asked lots of questions, so I kind of prepared myself to be the focus of attention.

Whether in regard to conversations with past volunteers, media information or cultural stereotyping, volunteers developed assumptions about the project they would be involved in that informed, to some degree, expectations concerning their role and societal status once engaged with the initiative. Whilst some actively sought to acquire first-hand experience of SDP work, volunteers who did not felt ill-informed concerning cultural expectations, and thus adopted a critical awareness surrounding issues associated with social interaction and the presentation of self:

Jamie: The first day of uni, you come in, in your glam rags, trying to look the bees knees don't you? And over there I was like "what do you do!?" because it's not the same culture, it's not the same environment it's not the same context. Because if you turn up in your bright brand new spanking Adidas trainers they're going to think worse of you than they might already do.

This lack of knowledge regarding how to present oneself, and the ambiguity that surrounded the role of volunteer within Zambia, manifested itself in a reliance upon previous experiences to ensure that key aspects of the role were adhered to as closely as possible. Yet volunteers who adopted such strategies drew upon a UK context to inform their practices without consideration for the diverse and complex cultural climate in which they would be immersed.

Gemma: Because I was a qualified football coach I thought fine, I'll just repeat what I do in England.

Whilst Goffman's notion of identity and self (Goffman 1961, 1990, 1991) are premised upon social interaction, volunteer preconceptions of what it was to *be*

engaged with SDP work exemplified the initial expectations of the required role. Such perceptions provided an understanding of how key roles within the SDP movement are established and negotiated through interaction with a variety of resources/personnel, delineating how such communication, or lack thereof, aids in identity formation and expectations concerning the role of voluntary worker. These considerations arguably already provide opportunities for practical application within the field of development. The importance of accurate information and effective briefing for informed identity preparation and cultural acclimatisation should be further considered in light of such findings. Specifically, briefing and prior training of volunteers that directly concerns volunteer identity and role may help to provide more accurate identity preparation as well as greater calm for volunteers as they prepare to engage with SDP work.

## **EXPERIENCES AND EFFECT ON IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOUR**

Volunteer experiences within this paper highlight what Goffman (1969, 1972, 1990) perceives as the duality of identity; negotiation between perspectives concerning notions of self that are held by the individual performer and those that are held by observers. Observer (Zambians) expectations of volunteers were based upon messages conveyed by social hierarchies and discourses that created a “*mzungu*”<sup>i</sup> identity, in this instance a term used to refer to people of European descent and typically associated with leading an affluent lifestyle, a conception of self that altered behaviour once the volunteers were engaged with the local Zambian communities. Thus, disparity between perspectives created significant inconsistencies concerning volunteer identity formation and resulted in disruption where volunteer identities became at worst contested, and at best misunderstood.

Prior to arrival it became evident that volunteers constructed ideas and notions regarding the way in which they ought to act or behave concerning their role as volunteer. However, role identity and the construction of self are determined through a continual process of social interaction between both the performer and observers, thus performances in relation to notions of self-presentation are “...molded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is

presented” (Goffman 1959 p. 35). Therefore, upon arrival social interaction between both the volunteers and Zambian communities helped to inform conceptions of self, allowing for a clearer understanding of what was actually expected of the volunteer. Such processes effectively shaped the manner in which volunteers presented themselves so as to portray an identity that managed to adhere to the expectations of the local communities:

Jamie: The way I sort of acted and probably presented myself changed because of the culture I was in and evolved as I was there. So I think, when I first arrived, you’re very much trying to sell yourself as a person.

This process of interaction featured as a fundamental experience for all volunteers involved. Most significant was the issue recounted by volunteers concerning their surprise at becoming the recipient of intense expectation. Permeating all aspects of their social interaction and role specific responsibilities were the expectations of the Zambian people. These expectations were various, but were primarily linked to provision in terms of wealth and knowledge.

Peter: They [local Zambians] thought that I was a really rich person who could solve all of their problems, but in fact I was quite normal so...I think my expectations of me being able to help them and them to really look up to me was like superseded. It went beyond me being able to help them to me being almost like a God-like person...That I could solve all of their problems and I was super rich and I could help every single person in Zambia and that I could make every single person happy by providing everything they wanted. Erm - which obviously wasn’t true. So I think they deemed my identity to be much more powerful than I actually was capable of being.

Gemma: Going in as a white outsider, you’re expected to be...not in a negative way – more intelligent, more equipped than them...I think because you are there as part of this programme, they [local Zambians] think you have all the answers that it’s fine, we’ll [volunteers] give them to them, because they’ll be able to deliver it. I don’t want to say its negative because it was part of the experience, and I wouldn’t want to change it, but it is kind of thrown on you when you turn

up expecting to do one thing and you're expected to do something else, it does throw you a bit.

Interacting with Zambian citizens, programme participants and peer leaders exposed significant identity expectations for volunteers that were unanticipated and quite overwhelming in certain cases. As white 'outsiders' volunteers reflected on the ethics of practice and the local perceptions of the voluntary role, an individual who was perceived as containing advanced knowledge, resources and wealth to be provided rather than facilitators of mutual knowledge exchange. Such expectations reinforced the hegemonic relations that frame international development work and the socio-political divides between the global North/South (Kothari 2006; Razack 2005). Yet those residing in the Zambian communities also facilitated these identities. Therefore, volunteers encountered unique identity disruption whereby their perceived social role, assisted by Zambian perspectives, incorporated various components that were unanticipated by the individual volunteers themselves.

Peter: I think the [Zambian] head teacher and the teachers thought we were gurus in the classroom and we could almost magically help the children become really intelligent, which just wasn't true.

Jamie: You're seen as almost the knower of everything, you're expected, not expected but I think you're perceived as knowing everything about what you're there to do... so I think if they [local Zambians] ask you a question you're expected to know the answer.

Volunteer characteristics thus presented information which served to confirm or reject stereotypes and preconceptions amongst those within Zambian communities. Here the connections between spatial imaginations, social interaction and conceptions of self-identity form a great importance in understanding the practices of international voluntary work (Desforges 2000; Jones 2011). Whilst many of the volunteers were accepting of identities that, to some extent, reinforced the social stereotypes concerning international development work, a minority of volunteers were aware of perpetuating identities that contributed towards sustaining global disparities, and recognised the need to adhere closely to the programme's mandate at the cost of

exhibiting a sense of emotional detachment to those residing in the Zambian community.

Gemma: It [the SDP initiative] kind of made me a bit more aware that yes, I am there to help, but in terms of resources, if we wanted to sponsor a peer leader's education, or if we want to give them a t-shirt then yeah, but in terms of buying stuff on a day to day basis we shouldn't. It made me more aware that although yes you want to be compassionate and you want to help them [local Zambians] you shouldn't because they expect too much of you, and that's not what you're there to do. You're not there to feed them and clothe them.

When considering the adoption of specific roles within diverse societal settings Goffman (1961, p. 87-88) indicates that "...a self, then, virtually awaits the individual entering a position; he need only conform to the pressures on him and he will find a me ready-made for him". Indeed, the very appearance of volunteers contributed towards a conception of self that pertained to a clear understanding of what was *to be* a voluntary worker within such a context. The notion of identity was bound by an already complete meaning amongst the Zambian communities, a semiotic reading of self that contained a particular kind of knowledge, "a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" (Barthes 1972, p. 117). Pre-established notions of volunteers and volunteer activity amongst the Zambians served to confirm prevalent societal beliefs that embodied the 'mzungu' identity, further reinforcing expectations relating to financial provision, levels of knowledge and perceptions of Western 'outsiders'. Discussions with the Zambian Site Coordinator [Sarah] revealed the core values associated with the 'mzungu' identity, demonstrating insight into the Zambian perceptions' of role behaviour associated with their expectations concerning the purpose of the programme.

Sarah: They [local Zambian communities] think that you [Western volunteers] have come with a lot of equipment, a lot of money. So at the end of the day they will come to ask us peer leaders or coordinators, "we want money which those white people gave you, they can't just come all the way from England just to come here without money, I think they came with money, so we have to



share the money that they gave you”. So it’s quite challenging if they see you there they think you have come with money, they don’t really understand the thing you are there for; that it is an exchange programme – sharing ideas to form up a good community there. They think you have come with a lot of money just because you have come with different colours and are called a “mzungu”. It’s quite strange; whenever I go somewhere with a white person people [local Zambians] say, “Ah Sarah, she will become rich very soon eh, have you seen she is with the mzungus? - so she will be rich”.

Interacting with Zambian locals during and after voluntary placements, the site coordinator provided useful insight into the common conceptions held by Zambian observers that guide prevalent societal beliefs, providing key reference points upon which the volunteers constructed conceptions of self, identity and role appropriate behaviour. Acquiring knowledge from site coordinators emphasised the necessity of analysing SDP from the position of the Global South in order to attain an accurate and more comprehensive perspective of the social processes that guide such development programmes (Darnell and Hayhurst 2011, 2012; Lindsey and Grattan 2012). Events which express incompatibility with an individual’s notion of self, such as disparity within identity perceptions leading to identity disruption, as seen within these volunteer experiences, can create significant consequences. Participants may become confused, embarrassed and flustered, halting proceedings and rendering the situation unfamiliar (Goffman 1959). Previous positions may become untenable and both observers and performers may find themselves without a chartered course of action. Social interactions thus become disorganised and the performer’s reputation can become discredited, damaging notions of self (Goffman 1959). Consequences of such contrasting perceptions regarding volunteer identity thus posed significant issues for both the project recipients whose expectations were not met, and volunteers themselves, whose roles seemed inappropriate, or beyond them. As Goffman (1991, p. 170) indicates, “to engage in a particular activity in the prescribed spirit is to accept being a particular kind of person who dwells in a particular kind of world”. Whilst some volunteers feared that they could not live up to the demanding expectations imposed by the Zambian communities, expressing a desire to resist the perceived role of volunteer imputed to them, a willingness to conform to such expectations and

adopt a role that was identified as either inappropriate or ‘fake’ was ‘lived out’ by those once engaged with the local communities.

Peter: I didn’t feel as though I could live up to their expectations and I didn’t want to propagate a ‘cure all’ identity when I didn’t actually have that. So it felt as though I was living like a fake sort of like lifestyle out there.

Once immersed in the Zambian communities the volunteers quickly adopted a persona closely associated with the perceived expectations of the local communities, forging a personalised ‘front’ that became a “collective representation” or “a fact in its own right” (Goffman 1990, p. 37). The local Zambian communities believed aid workers possessed superior knowledge concerning many health related issues connected to the objectives of the programme, an expectation that was once again not realised by the volunteer cohort until entering into the communities. Thus, volunteers worked to ensure that individual representations of self were both compatible and consistent with the overall expectations of the role of ‘volunteer’, attempting to incorporate and epitomise the officially accredited values of the given society in which they resided (Goffman 1990).

Jamie: I was blagging it <sup>ii</sup>the whole time. Erm so I think if they ask you a question you’re expected to know the answer, particularly with things like HIV...but they knew far more than I did – the kids new more than I did! I was learning as we were going, I was having to read through fact sheets on the way there and on the way home to get up to speed with where they were.

Individual’s whose identities become disrupted in this way showed signs of negative emotional reactions to the identity disparities they faced and a clear acknowledgement of the ‘lived realities’ of volunteer work once confronted with the expectations of those residing in the Zambian community. Moreover, the experiences of the volunteers, in association with role expectations and the actualities of role performance, demonstrated a distinct lack of capability concerning key elements of delivery related to the aims and objectives of the initiative, especially in relation to knowledge pertaining to HIV and health related issues. Such realisations embody Goffman’s (1990) notion of ‘misrepresentation’, whereby the ‘audience’ [Zambian communities] are placed in a position to be duped and misled as key ‘performances’ from the volunteer community relay an impression of authenticity that caters to the cultural conditions of the community but contains little credibility. In itself, this poses potential problems for SDP projects, yet the complete overall consequences are not

realised by these initial reactions. Thus, we posit that it is the responsive actions taken by volunteers that pose the most significant implications for SDP projects.

## **RESPONSES TO EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY DISRUPTION**

The formation of identity must be considered a social construct, dependent upon interactions between both the performer and observer (Goffman 1959, 1990).

Through interacting with the local Zambian communities, volunteers presented notions of self that exhibited instances of role distance conveying a sense of detachment between both the performer and the role in which he/she was subject to perform (Goffman, 1969). Whilst the volunteers' experiences varied between interactions and upon encountering a number of individuals, each participant who went to Zambia experienced a sense of identity disruption and role distance, whereby interaction between the volunteers and Zambian locals promoted "...a wedge between the individual and his role, between doing and being" (Goffman 1961, p. 107-108).

Reacting to the unachievable or inappropriate expectations exhibited by the Zambians, volunteers responded by managing their identities so as to conform to the locals' perceptions of what was considered 'good' voluntary work and thus 'front stage' (Goffman 1990) expressions of self became increasingly important.

Jamie: You might even be a little bit fake, you might try and be more nice; more proactive than you normally are, putting yourself out to do more than you normally do.

Thus, identity management became a responsive strategy for volunteers concerning role disparity, in part, due to the disruption they faced upon entering into the Zambian communities. Once engaged with the local communities, some of the volunteers expressed feelings of ineptness and an inability to live up to the coaching standards and sporting requirements that were expected of the programme.

Beth: My knowledge of netball wasn't enough for what they [local Zambians] needed. So to me, becoming a friend and companion that was my way of dealing with the fact that I couldn't teach them much more, I couldn't make a significant amount of difference to their netball...it's not really making a significant difference in terms of their sporting lives, as much as their personal lives...towards the end I think I was becoming more of a friend than a coach,

they expected different things from you...but they wanted someone to relate to.

In response to feelings of incompetence, volunteers (re)negotiated their role through recognition of expectations pertaining to companionship, moving away from the preconceived notions of 'coach', and towards adopting the role of a friend or companion. Whilst these strategies may forge closer relations between those in the Zambian communities and that of the volunteers, such identity (re)negotiation may fall short of the original volunteer mandate emanating from the organisational perspective, thus limiting the potential or perceived beneficial impact of the project itself. Volunteers who experienced significant identity disruption exhibited disillusionment in various ways, employing coping strategies that led to avoidance or disengagement with the Zambian communities. This was most notable by Peter, one of the volunteers, when faced with medical requirements in a baby clinic.

Peter: The [Zambian] mothers expected, as we were white, that we would magically be able to cure their babies and that we were actually really good physiotherapists and could help them...I nearly walked out because I just couldn't cope with them thinking I could actually cure all their problems, if that involvement had continued I would have opted out of doing it. I think I hardened as a person...I just got the point where I would just ignore a lot of the Zambians, and wasn't very receptive to them trying to speak to me...I just didn't – almost didn't want to go to placement sometimes...I think I just lacked motivation to just engage with people and work with people as time went on...that's sort of my lasting memory of Zambia and how tough it was to live up to expectation.

In the surroundings of the local communities the construction of social identity became a focus of interaction and thus a central component of the 'me', that experience of the self in which the vision of 'others' is vitally present (Mead 1934). Volunteers delivering on the programme were caught between a constant (re)presentation of, and dialogue between, multiple 'fronts', those dictated by social interaction and those adopted from pre-established conditions set by the initiative itself. Role formation and the construction of self was a contested and negotiated concept, considered fluid, dynamic and open to interpretation. Volunteers were thus intent on 'living out' a conception of self that they had formed themselves, a self that they would like to be, and one that subsequently became second nature or a 'truer' reflection of the required role (Burns 1992; Goffman 1990). The context in which

they operated seemingly guided their actions towards adhering to the prevailing expectations of the community, reinforcing an identity that could be associated with the dominant power relations that guide the current SDP movement, reducing aid work and initiatives to a planned process of ‘resource giving’ as opposed to a mode of reciprocal knowledge exchange. Such dichotomies led to a contested vision of ‘self’ represented by an inward conflict expressed amongst the volunteer community. Those who parted with minor resources began to question their purpose as ‘volunteer’, the type of aid that they should be giving and the difficulties associated with the local perceptions of volunteer work and that of their own interpretations of the initiative’s mandate, this was especially evident when confronted with the pleading expectations of the local Zambian communities.

Gemma: When we had the [Zambian] peer leaders over I was in my room and one peer leader came in and was like, “aw have you got any black shorts”? I was like “yeah”, she [Zambian peer leader] was like, “can I have them?” So I was like, “alright”, it’s a pair of shorts, so I gave them to her, went to walk out and she said, “have you got any shoes?” I was like, “no” because why would I bring black shoes with me. So I was rummaging through my bag and found some kind of daps and was like “do these fit?” and they didn’t and it was like an awkward silence, like can’t you help me? And I was like...this is all I’ve got, and I felt bad...Then we went back outside and all the [Zambian] peer leaders were there, and she was showing them all what I’d given her and I was like, “please not now!” and they’re all coming up and asking if I can have little things, and it’s hard because if I knew they wanted a pair of shoes each I’d have brought them with me. They’re asking you and you can’t help them, you kind of feel like you’re letting them down.

Identity disruption through contrasting perceptions can create challenging circumstances for volunteers in SDP, and demonstrate negative implications of contested volunteer identity that pose a threat to development projects as a whole. Questions could be posed here as to whose expectations are being honoured in this scenario. If volunteers alter their identity by expressing upon locals an alternative ‘front’ to the one in which they anticipate, the degree to which aid recipients are appropriately supported could be limited. Furthermore, this strategy could be argued to perpetuate the imbalances witnessed amongst global North/South communities, as the Zambian expectations were realised through the adaptive role of the volunteer and the continually negotiated conception of an ‘idealised front’. Our exposition of role disruption and the negative reflections expressed by the volunteer community are

highlighted not in response to a diminishing review of the programme but to offer avenues of alteration that may facilitate change for the benefit of both the host community and volunteers. Whilst the ability to flatten such hierarchical relations may seem unachievable as inequality and privileged positions are ingrained within the social constructs of two vastly differing societies (Sin 2010), the identity disruption experienced by the volunteers can aid in providing a productive educational opportunity to elicit change. Specifically an increased transparency in relation to role expectations and responsibilities is required to enhance volunteer operations, reviewing the intended commitment of volunteers on a day-to-day basis to identify whether this may alter upon encountering a range of differing circumstances throughout volunteer programmes (Barbierie et al 2012; Tomazos and Butler 2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

Concerning the presentation of self Goffman (1990) indicates that “...to be a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess required attributes, but also to sustain the standards and conduct of appearance that one’s social grouping attaches thereto” (p. 81). Despite the interactive element of identity construction and the discursive relations that volunteers forged with a number of individuals associated with the programme, SDP volunteer identity was underpinned by the institutionalised hierarchies of poverty and privilege evident amongst the global North/South (Black 2010; Darnell 2011, 2012; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011; Tiessen 2011). Global hierarchies of power framed volunteer identities within the field of development, ‘subjectifying’ them to a predetermined role, and clearly demarcated standards and conduct of appearance deemed acceptable by the Zambian communities. From the recipient perspective, volunteers were expected to contribute in different, more material and tangible, predefined ways. Volunteers unknowingly entered roles saturated with anticipation, embodied by Zambian perceptions of ‘whiteness’ and the label of ‘mzungu’ that appeared to reinforce the notion that aid recipients are comprised of communities ‘in need of help’ from the more developed and advanced global West (Darnell 2012). To this end, sport and its ability to impact upon developmental issues within SDP programmes possesses a mythopoeic status (Coalter

2007). Fuelled by conventional thinking SDP programmes ought to be subject to critical in-depth empirical analysis for future clarity and effective implementation.

Appropriating an interactionist perspective concerning the construction, management and presentation of self in relation to SDP initiatives highlights contentions surrounding volunteer identity and its impact upon the delivery of the programme. Moreover, an interactionist perspective allowed for a greater appreciation of how individuals, subject to the initiative, were constituted, how they defined themselves and were understood in terms of others (Hacking 2004), an approach that revealed key aspects of identity negotiation, role formation and a practical insight into the effectiveness of aid work and delivery. Discourses of global social hierarchies within Zambian culture through SDP practice have been seen within this paper to hail the 'mzungu' volunteers into connections of whiteness, expertise and wealth that pose a significant barrier for the pursuit of an effective functioning programme, exposing the existence of social hierarchies 'on the ground'. Yet these are not social identities solely constructed by the western counterparts, they are largely facilitated by the Zambian community, and it is only once volunteers enter this community and engage with the programme that they start to conform to, and thus perpetuate, the dominant power relations and hierarchies that frame the socio-political constructs of international development work (Giulianotti 2004, 2011a, 2011b; Tiessen 2011). Here conceptions of self and impression management are not to be considered unidirectional, identity construction between both host communities and volunteer tourists often occur within 'heterogeneous spaces' (Edensor 1998), whereby multiple identities are represented and negotiated amongst a complex interplay of interactions. This provides a platform to display personalised 'fronts' that host communities perceive as suitable to volunteer expectations. As Sin (2010) indicates, local host communities may present particular notions of self towards their own community whilst simultaneously, "presenting themselves as suitable for the caring relationships demanded in volunteer tourism" (p. 987). Here then actions are guided by such power relations and conformity to the 'norms' expected by the local communities leads to the "institutionalisation" of the core hierarchies that are perpetuated by the current SDP movement. Thus, upon interacting in the field, local role expectations of 'mzungu' volunteers were seen to contrast those anticipated by the volunteers themselves, creating identity disruption. Consequences of such disruptions catalysed

various volunteer coping strategies, or responses that impacted personal interactions with aid recipients, their attitude towards their role, and ultimately their involvement within the project.

In light of such considerations practical recommendations can be made for SDP practitioners and NGOs implementing development programmes through sport. Of paramount concern is effective communication. The local Zambian conceptions around volunteer identity were arguably created through ingrained social hierarchies that magnify the connections between whiteness, knowledge, wealth and an abundance of resources. Such considerations should be addressed within SDP practice via clear and consistent communication. Messages must be conveyed that begin to replace assumptions instigated by social hierarchies with a clearer representation of the role of volunteer, their goals, motives and abilities. Such messages ought to be communicated effectively to aid recipients and inform their volunteers of this goal. In addition, volunteers need to be more accurately informed prior to their placements of the required role(s) and responsibilities, limiting preconceptions founded on assumptions to ensure that volunteers arrive in the field informed and more equipped to respond to challenges around the 'mzungu' identity. Such actions may bolster, rather than undermine, the accurate messages regarding SDP projects, volunteers, and their goals, motives and abilities.

Our portrait of volunteer identity prior to entering the field and upon leaving was imbued by a strong imperative to 'help' aid-recipients, a premise that can enhance notions of "otherness" and reinforce stereotypes that portray aid-recipients as inferior or less able (Sin 2009, 2010). Therefore, we must continue to be critical of the volunteer tourist and their perceived expectations, outcomes and narratives of self when engaging with volunteer programmes (Darnell 2011; Razack 2002; Razack 2005). Motivating factors for volunteer tourists are not solely limited to altruistic aims with research indicating that self-gratification and a quest to acquire knowledge, a sense of intellectual enrichment and specific skill sets to aid future career prospects have been identified as factors that drive participation in volunteer tourism (Broad 2003; Brown and Lehto 2005; Bussell and Forbes 2002; Coghlan 2008; Lo and Lee 2011; Tomazos and Butler 2012). Here then an expectation must be placed upon volunteers to explore role perceptions and structural realities that demarcate contributions made towards the delivery of programmes and the host communities



that they enter, moving beyond a descriptive conception of culture and towards a critical self-awareness (Carrilio and Mathiesen 2006; Mathiesen and Lager 2007; Wehbi 2009).

The existence of challenging cultural differences from a volunteer perspective and the disparate conceptions around identity discussed within this paper pose a significant question for qualitative SDP research that we hope can contribute towards the ongoing debate surrounding the transformative vision for SDP (Darnell 2012; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011): Is our concept of aid and development appropriately constructed upon the perspectives of programme designers and aid recipients? In response to such a question it is imperative that we continue to consider the research context as occurring in a constant state of flux, whereby roles will be negotiated and a multiplicity of actors, agencies and organisations will impact upon how programmes are conducted 'on the ground'. Whilst this paper is limited in its acquisition of only one voice from the host community, future research surrounding SDP and volunteer tourism must continue to place emphasis upon collecting the perspectives of the aid-recipients (Razack 2002; Sin 2009; Kay 2009, 2012). To consider the assemblage of actors involved, and to capture their 'lived' experiences concerning the development, delivery and reception of SDP initiatives, enables one to provide both the policy and practice community with a practical appreciation of what is an increasingly complex field (Pawson 2006).

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<sup>i</sup> The term "Mzungu" literally translates to mean 'someone who roams aimlessly' or an 'aimless wanderer' and can therefore be seen as a term of endearment in the everyday use of the word. However, the term may also contain negative connotations as it is often used by Zambians to refer to people of European descent, typically those who are associated with wealth and leading an affluent lifestyle, and can therefore be deployed in a derogatory manner.

<sup>ii</sup> A common slang word used to convince an individual or group of individuals by rhetoric or to gain acceptance or approval through persuasive conversation.

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