Hope and Strengths within Adaptive Sailing: Narratives from the Queen's Quay Disabled Sailing Program

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Hope and Strengths within Adaptive Sailing: Narratives from the Queen’s Quay Disabled Sailing Program

By

James Anderson

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Department of Kinesiology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2015

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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ABSTRACT

I explored how participants were transformed through their interactions with each other and within an adaptive sailing program using a Hope and Strengths Perspective underpinned by the Duality of Structure. Through 12 semi-structured interviews with six sailors, four volunteers and two staff members in the Queen’s Quay Disabled Sailing Program (QQDSP), I examined participants’ experiences and how the QQDSP’s structures facilitated those experiences. Participants described their overall experiences in terms of independence and a sense of community. They developed new strengths and enhanced existing strengths by overcoming challenges and through access to resources and community support. Subsequently, participants used their new and/or enhanced strengths to achieve personal goals and contribute to community-oriented goals. The QQDSP facilitated those experiences through its mission and by providing participants with various opportunities to share their strengths with others. Participants were ultimately shaping and being shaped by each other and the QQDSP.
DEDICATION

To members of my hope-enhancing team: family, friends, colleagues and everyone who I have met along the “Road Less Travelled” thus far. You have all played a role in shaping me to be the person I am today. Thank you.

To Sarai, your hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed. Without your trust and support this thesis would not have been possible.

To everyone at the QQDSP, thank you for welcoming me into your community.

This thesis is for you.
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Mom, thank you for giving Missy and I everything when you had nothing. And dad, I really appreciate your support and renewed enthusiasm.

Lastly, thank you to my thesis participants for trusting me to share your incredible stories.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASN: Able Sail Network
BAS: Burlington Able Sail
BOD: Board of Directors
DSA: Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia
DSAO: Disabled Sailing Association of Ontario
GOB: Get on Board program
LMYC: LaSalle Mariner’s Yacht Club
PWD(s): Person/people with disabilities
QQDSP: Queen’s Quay Disabled Sailing Program
RPSA: Rocky Point Sailing Association
SCIO: Spinal Cord Injury Ontario
SQ: Sub-question
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Recreation can positively contribute to all people’s quality of life (Anderson & Heyne, 2012). Anderson and Heyne (2012) argue that the social benefits of recreation may have meaningful impacts for people with disabilities (PWDs) as opposed to a sedentary lifestyle. Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) advocate for a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation for PWDs. A strengths-based approach identifies peoples’ inherent strengths and the resources available within their social environment that can enhance those strengths.

Most research exploring recreation for PWDs concentrates on conventional forms of recreation (i.e., programming offered within recreation facilities) (e.g., Anderson & Heyne, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Mayer & Anderson, 2014; Mulligan & Polkinghorne, 2013). However, outdoor recreation experiences also exist for PWDs. Outdoor recreation entails physical activity in a natural outdoor environment (e.g. skiing, hiking, kayaking, sailing, etc.). PWDs participate in a broad range of outdoor activities in a variety of different environments, despite the misconception by both PWDs and able-bodied people that outdoor recreation activities are dangerous or inaccessible (McAvoy, 2001). Like able-bodied people, some PWDs actively pursue risk, challenge and adventure (Anderson et al., 1997). Researchers exploring the experiences of PWDs in outdoor recreation indicate benefits such as increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, enhanced knowledge and leisure skills, greater feelings of independence, and increased socialization (Freudenberg & Arlinghaus, 2009; McAvoy, 2001). While the benefits of outdoor recreation have been explored, there is limited research that examines outdoor
recreation for PWDs from a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Paraschak, 2013a; Saleebey, 1996; Snyder, 2002). My thesis focuses on sailing as a form of outdoor recreation.

Organized adaptive sailing\(^1\) in Canada began in British Columbia. At the 1986 Vancouver Expo, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher donated a specially modified sailboat to Rick Hansen in honour of his “Man in Motion” tour\(^2\). In 1989, Hansen presented the boat to Sam Sullivan, a prominent member of the Vancouver disabled community. Sullivan subsequently founded the Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia (DSA). In 1991, Sullivan organized the Mobility Cup (DSA, 2014). His goal was to promote public awareness of PWDs’ capabilities in addition to providing an opportunity for PWDs to compete in a regatta. The Mobility Cup is currently Canada’s largest regatta for PWDs and attracts international competitors (ASN, 2014).

In 1999, inspired by the rapid development of DSA and the Mobility Cup, Danny McCoy founded the Disabled Sailing Association of Ontario (DSAO). The same year the DSAO hosted the Mobility Cup in Toronto (DSAO, 2014a). The DSAO’s mission is as follows:

1) To provide sailing opportunities for Ontarians regardless of ability or age.

2) To provide unique, enjoyable experiences for its participants which include opportunities for social, recreational, rehabilitative and competitive activities.

3) To build confidence and self-esteem for people with disabilities, and enhance

---

\(^1\) Adaptive sailing refers to the modified sailboats and equipment within a sailing program for PWDs. However, “disabled” sailing is a commonly used term when describing sailing programs for PWDs in Canada. The term seems to have originated in British Columbia in 1991 (DSA, 2014). However, sailing programs in Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Ontario sometimes use the term “able sail”, presumably to counter potential stereotypes and stigma associated with disability.

\(^2\) “In March 1985, Rick set off from Vancouver to wheel 40,000 kilometers through 34 countries on the Man In Motion World Tour to prove the potential of [PWDs]” (Rick Hansen Foundation, 2014, para. 2).
their independence.

4) To facilitate the integration of disabled and able-bodied recreation and competition. (DSAOb, 2014)

A Board of Directors (BOD) governs the DSAO. The DSAO consists of two chapters: the Queen’s Quay Disabled Sailing Program (QQDSP) and Burlington Able Sail (BAS). A third chapter may be developed at the LaSalle Mariners Yacht Club (LMYC), in Windsor. Since 2011, the LMYC in partnership with the DSAO has hosted Experience Disabled Sailing Windsor. Experience Disabled Sailing Windsor occurs annually in September and provides PWDs living in Windsor and the surrounding areas the opportunity to sail. The DSAO provides two sailboats and trained volunteer sailors. In the future, the LMYC wants to develop a summer adaptive sailing program similar to the QQDSP. The DSAO is a member of Ontario Sailing and Sail Canada³; however Ontario Sailing and Sail Canada do not provide any adaptive sailing resources. Ontario Sailing’s and Sail Canada’ primary role is to provide general sailing-related teaching curriculum and oversight. They also advertise the DSAO’s job postings, enabling the DSAO the opportunity to recruit certified instructors and staff. Sail Canada’s Can Sail programs (teaching curricula for various sailing certifications) and “Sail for Life” (long-term athlete development plan) focus on able-bodied sailors’ development. There are no modifications for sailors with disabilities⁴. The DSAO is a member of the Able Sail Network (ASN) (ASN, 2014). The ASN is a cooperative association for adaptive sailing

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³ Sail Canada is the national sport organization that governs sailing in Canada. They organize Paralympic sailing qualifiers through various regattas for competitive parasailors. Any parasailor can qualify if they have access to an adaptive sailboat and other necessary equipment. Sail Canada has no direct involvement with the Mobility Cup or adaptive sailing programs in Canada (personal communication, 2014).

⁴ I define sailors with disabilities as recreational sailors, whereas I define parasailors as sailors who compete competitively internationally.
programs and participants across Canada. The purpose of the ASN is to share resources and encourage collaboration between adaptive sailing programs. It also currently organizes the Mobility Cup (ASN, 2014).

The DSAO’s flagship program is the QQDSP, which is located in Toronto. The primary focus of my study is the QQDSP because it is the DSAO’s most established program (DSAO, 2014a). The program is active from May until the end of August and employs four able-bodied staff members. Through the initiative of a volunteer fundraising committee, the QQDSP is primarily supported by private donations, fundraising events and various grants. This enables the QQDSP to offer sailing at a low cost to accommodate PWDs who may have limited income (personal communication, 2014). The QQDSP offers two-hour scheduled sails, three times per day, five days a week. In addition, races are run every Wednesday night outside of the normal scheduled sailing times. The QQDSP encompasses five types of participation: (1) Outreach groups - PWDs who are from an assisted-living home or community program, (2) PWDs who live independently within the community and sail at their leisure, (3) Wednesday night racing for competitive sailors, (4) Around the Island - a monthly full-day sail trip around the Toronto Islands and (5) Get On Board (GOB) - a program specifically for children and young adults with disabilities aged 12 to 21 years of age (DSAO, 2014a). The QQDSP has no systematic programming structure or evaluation method to ensure the DSAO’s mission is being actively fulfilled.
The range of the QQDSP’s sailors’ disabilities is broad. The physical and cognitive abilities of sailors range from low-functioning to high-functioning. Some sailors have congenital disabilities, while others have acquired disabilities as a result of an accident. The QQDSP is heavily reliant on volunteers. The majority of volunteers are able-bodied, however there are volunteers who have physical disabilities. Three types of sailboats are available at the QQDSP: the Martin 16, the Sonar and the Liberty (see Appendix A). Generally, a volunteer sailor accompanies a PWD in the sailboat, though some sailors with disabilities do not require a volunteer. Most volunteers actively sail for PWDs, while others act as companions in case the sailors require physical boat handling assistance in strong winds.

The Martin 16 is the sailboat most frequently used. It has a two-person capacity; however, it can also be sailed by one person. The Martin 16 is mainly used by PWDs who have very limited mobility. It can be equipped with specialty devices such as the Wind Lass or Sip and Puff if needed (see Appendix B). The Wind Lass and the Sip and Puff allow people with very limited mobility (e.g., people with quadriplegia) to control the sailboat by blowing or sucking on a tube or by using a small joystick. People who have mobility issues are lowered into the Martin 16 by a Hoyer lift. The majority of volunteers sail the Martin 16. The Sonar is generally used for Outreach Groups comprised of people with developmental disabilities. The Sonar allows Outreach Groups’ members to share a common experience with their peers as a group in the same sailboat. It also enables personal support workers to be with the group. It is not accessible

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5 Low-functioning sailors’ cognitive and physical abilities are severely limited. They are unable to speak and have little mobility. A volunteer sails for them. High-functioning sailors can actively and clearly communicate. They sail independently or with little assistance.

6 A person with quadriplegia has partial or complete paralysis of his/her limbs and torso.
for people with limited mobility. The Sonar has a capacity for six people, two of whom are able-bodied volunteer sailors while one person is the personal support worker from an Outreach Group. The Liberty is a one-person sailboat. It can only be sailed by PWDs who have upper body strength. It is the least used sailboat at the QQDSP.

**Statement of the Research Question**

How does a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) explain an adaptive sailing program?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of participants involved in the QQDSP. I will examine participants’ experiences (sub-question 1) and how the QQDSP facilitates those experiences (sub-question 2).

**Theoretical and Practical Justification**

**Theoretical justification.** There is no known research to date that examines the experiences of participants within an adaptive sailing program. There is also no known research that examines outdoor recreation for PWDs using a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a). Research regarding outdoor recreation for PWDs has typically been framed from a deficit perspective (e.g., PWDs’ barriers to participation in outdoor recreation) (Burns & Graefe, 2007; Burns, Watson & Paterson, 2013; Freudenberg & Arlinghaus, 2009; McAvoy, 2001). Outdoor recreation in general is sometimes perceived to be inaccessible for PWDs due to the assumption that it is too challenging or risky (McAvoy, 2001); nonetheless, many PWDs do participate in outdoor activities. Very limited research examines PWDs’ strengths within recreation (e.g.,

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7 I refer to participants as being sailors, volunteers, staff and BOD members, because they are all participating in some way within the QQDSP.
Anderson & Heyne, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Hood & Carruthers, 2007). The relationships between recreation programs’ specific processes and measurable outcomes are poorly understood (Sibthorb, Paisley & Gookin, 2007). Sibthorb et al. (2007) describe these relationships as getting lost in a “black box”. The “black box” prevents researchers from explaining how outcomes are achieved. My analysis of participants’ experiences within the QQDSP addresses this gap in the literature. It will also extends Paraschak’s (2013a) research of a Strengths Perspective that incorporates practices of hope, by providing empirical evidence based on participants’ narratives of an outdoor recreation program. In doing so my study highlights the relationships between participants’ goals and strengths and how those goals and strengths are shaping and being shaped by interactions with others and the QQDSP’s structures.

**Practical justification.** I believe examining the experiences of PWDs and able-bodied people in a particular outdoor recreation program will increase practitioners’ and researchers’ understanding of the processes that lead to potential positive outcomes for everyone involved. Specifically, my study highlights how outdoor recreation can foster meaningful experiences for PWDs. The practical purpose of my study is to help program managers of adaptive sailing programs recognize how they can assist in maximizing participants’ outdoor recreation experiences. Furthermore, the practical purpose is to help the QQDSP’s participants recognize their inherent strengths and identify possible resources available within the program that can enhance those strengths and assist them in the realization of personal and community goals. My study is currently relevant because the DSAO plans to develop a chapter in Windsor.
Theoretical Framework

My study is guided by the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984), which is foundational to a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) and relevant to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). The following section details my theoretical framework.

Duality of Structure. Duality of Structure rests on the assumption that the perceived world is a product of social construction (Giddens, 1984). Nothing occurs naturally, but rather peoples’ actions and decisions are shaped by existing social structures. Duality of Structure frames the interaction between structure and agency in a very particular way, wherein individuals shape while being concomitantly shaped by social structures. According to Giddens (1984), agency is a person’s ability to act or to refrain from acting within existing social structures. These structures are created through rules and resources that act as boundaries and ultimately shape the possible actions imagined by people (Giddens, 1984).

Rules consist of two components: internal and external. Internal rules are based on a person’s assumptions and ideologies\(^8\) that construct the perception of his/her social life. For example, a person may assume that “the lives of [PWDs] are totally different than the lives of people without disabilities” (Easter Seals, 2014). External rules are regulations that are documented and dictate how a person is to act within his/her social boundaries (e.g., laws and policies) (Ponic, 1995).

Resources consist of: material resources, personal resources and interpersonal resources. Material resources are tangible and necessary for a person to function in

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\(^8\) Assumptions refer to normalized beliefs, values and ideas. Ideologies refer to sets of normalized assumptions (Ponic, 1995).
his/her social life (e.g., money, facilities, equipment). Personal resources consist of a person’s mental (i.e., motivations and feelings) and physical state (i.e., health) that affect his/her actions within social life. An example is a person’s ability to cope with stress or to be motivated to achieve a goal. Interpersonal (i.e., human) resources refer to other people who can positively affect a person’s ability to act within his/her social life (Ponic, 1995).

A person’s actions are governed by internal rules—the perception of possibilities that exist within his/her social boundaries (i.e., structures). Internal rules structure how a person understands and responds to external rules. External rules are thus a “formal manifestation” of internal rules, which assign meaning to material, personal and interpersonal resources (Ponic, 1995).

Structures are maintained by a person’s consent to act within social boundaries. They can be self-imposed and/or influenced by others. Practical consciousness consists of everything that a person implicitly knows about how to “go on” within the context of social life without being able to give any reasoning (Giddens, 1984). A person’s practical consciousness may impede the understanding that dominant social values can be resisted and furthermore that other possibilities exist outside social boundaries.

A person must interact with structures in order for them to affect his/her agency. This interaction impacts Giddens’ (1984) concept of power, the “capacity to achieve outcomes” (p. 257). The better able a person is to realize his/her goal, the more power he/she has. Resources and external rules can either help or impede a person’s desired outcomes and thus affect a person’s degree of power. When the internal rules of certain groups align with already established external rules, those groups tend to exercise more power. Regardless of a person’s level of power, all people have the power to potentially
shape the world around them. Individuals can use their power to maintain the dominant social order or a person can use his/her power to change boundaries.

**Social Model of Disability.** Oliver (1992) argues that disability is a social construction. He stated that, “Disability cannot be abstracted from the social world which produces it; it does not exist outside the social structures in which it is located and independent of the meanings given to it” (Oliver, 1992, p. 101). The Social Model of Disability describes impairment as a medical condition (physical or mental) that leads to a “disability”, and disability as being the interaction between a person living with impairment and their environment. It implies that the physical and social environment must transform to facilitate people living with impairments’ full participation in society. This is contrary to the medical model of disability, and the notion that people living with impairments must be changed or “cured” to accommodate society.

**Strengths Perspective.** The Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) originated in the field of social work. It challenges the traditional practice of identifying problems where a professional is perceived as an expert in interpreting a person’s story in order to reach a diagnosis (Anderson & Heyne, 2012). Instead, the Strengths Perspective encourages practitioners to focus on what a person is capable of achieving (i.e., strengths), rather than what he/she is unable to do due to barriers or circumstances (e.g., disability). This approach does not refute that barriers exist. It reframes problems by analyzing and focusing on what is already going well within a situation (Paraschak & Thompson, 2014). According to Saleebey (1996), the Strengths Perspective “is not denying the verdict [i.e., conditions confronting PWDs] but it does defy and challenge the sentence these individuals face as the only possible outcome” (p. 303). The key principles of the
Strengths Perspective are (1) every person or group has strengths, (2) their challenges provide opportunities to develop strengths, (3) their peak capacity of growth is unknown, (4) “experts” help by working with them, rather than on them, (5) resources are available in every environment and (6) all relationships must be caring and value the context (Saleebey, 2009, p. 15-18).

**Practices of Hope.** Hope is universally perceived as being positive. Snyder (2002) argues that hope relates to a person’s thinking processes. A person’s thinking processes have the potential to elicit positive emotions. He believes that human actions are innately goal directed. Goals are a key component of Hope Theory (Snyder, 2002). Snyder (2002) defines hope as “the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways” (p. 249). Thus, a person’s goals, pathways and agentic thinking are interconnected. These elements cannot be analyzed in isolation of each other. A high-hope person will have the mental energy to envision an iterative pathway and engage in agentic thought. Although barriers can impede agency, a high-hope person can envision multiple pathways to cope with stress and to achieve his/her goal.

Jacobs (2008) conceptualizes hope as being, “social in nature, rather than individual and wrapped up in the web of social relations that each of us inhabits” (p. 785). Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope extends Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory. A person’s inherent strengths, support from his/her community and access to resources can enhance a person’s strengths and assist him/her to accomplish his/her goals. These goals, in one form or another, may contribute back to a “broader community of relevance” (Paraschak, 2013a). Jacobs (2008) argues that sharing in and participating
towards a shared future fosters hope through a process of engaging in reflection and action. Therefore, hope should not be understood as “hope for” something (e.g., personal aspirations); instead it should be understood as “hope in” a shared future (Jacobs, 2005, p. 786). In this sense, a person’s goals, pathways and agency (Snyder, 2002) can be shared with or supported by others within a hope-enhancing environment (Paraschak, 2013a). To develop interpersonal connections that foster hope, people must be available to each other (Jacobs, 2008). Mutual acceptance, respect and the ability to recognize each other’s self-worth is fundamental. Individuals must be open to transformation and find a balance between listening and sharing their perspectives (Jacobs, 2008). Paraschak (2013a) argues, “each time we opt to frame our actions in hope we potentially cultivate hope in others” (p. 238). Practices of hope thus extend the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984) through a commitment, in one’s ongoing actions, to actively take into account and foster the conditions for people in one’s community of relevance, thereby simultaneously shaping the social structures around them (Paraschak, 2013a).

I argue that hope can be found in outdoor recreation for PWDs. By acknowledging a person’s self-worth, practices of hope are inherently linked to Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a; Saleeby, 1996). Drawing upon the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984), the Strengths Perspective challenges the various psychological, structural and social boundaries that PWDs encounter in their environments. A Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) can help PWDs understand that other possibilities exist outside the lifestyle they may know. This framework is about changing an individual’s or a group’s practical consciousness.
Assumptions

1. My fundamental assumption is derived from the *Canadian Sport Policy* (2012), which states that participation in sport activities can provide all participants with positive physical, social and mental health outcomes to enable productive and rewarding lives (p. 4). I believe that outdoor recreation for PWDs can contribute to long-term social and emotional benefits by providing the freedom to experience the natural environment (McAvoy, 2001).

2. I further assume that all of the QQDSP’s participants have inherent strengths and that the challenges and resources within the QQDSP enable participants (sometimes with the help of each other) to enhance and use their strengths.

3. I am also assuming that the QQDSP’s participants are shaping and being shaped by their experiences. I recognize this as an on-going process that occurs over an extended period of time.

4. A crucial assumption is that in order for PWDs to achieve the full benefits associated with outdoor recreation, a program’s values must be participant-centered\(^9\). The purpose of the program should be to work with and empower PWDs as opposed to solely accommodating their physical needs. As such, complimentary power relations need to be produced (Paraschak & Thompson, 2014).

5. I also assume that the participation of PWDs in outdoor recreation can cultivate hope. According to Jacobs (2008) hope requires sharing and participation within a “horizontal relationship of mutuality that looks toward a shared future” (p. 786). In this

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\(^9\) A participant-centered approach focuses on the participant’s strengths, capabilities and needs.
sense, a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) can facilitate the QQDSP’s participants’ abilities to see themselves contributing to the social fabric of responsibility, wherein their actions affect the world they live in (Jacobs, 2005).

6. My final assumption is that discussing the QQDSP from a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) will have a positive impact on its participants and the QQDSP as an organization. The Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) will help committed participants with disabilities and able-bodied participants to work together in a process that empowers all participants. Furthermore, the Hope and Strengths Perspective will help researchers, sport managers and the DSAO to understand how these processes may be shaped (Paraschak, 2013a).

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sub-Question 1

How does a Hope and Strengths perspective explain participants’ experiences within the QQDSP?

Societal views of disability have changed in recent decades, partly due to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). These changes have impacted the practices of professionals working with PWDs. Buntinx (2013) argues that disability has “moved from the area of pathology into the area of human functioning” (p. 7). The focus of professionals has thus shifted to assessing the strengths and (to a smaller extent) hope for PWDs (Buchanan & Lopez, 2013; Buntinx, 2013). Nonetheless, limited literature examines sport and recreation for PWDs from a Strengths
Perspective (Anderson & Heyne, 2012; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Hood & Carruthers, 2007) and to date there is no known literature that analyses hope within sport and recreation for PWDs.

**Strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation.** Anderson and Heyne (2012) identified the Strengths Perspective framework (Saleebey, 1996) as an approach to therapeutic recreation. The Strengths Perspective concentrates on a person’s capabilities that may have become distorted as a result of trauma or circumstance (Saleebey, 1996). The Strengths Perspective framework has the potential to empower a person, but only if the person is considered to be the expert of his/ her own life (Anderson & Heyne, 2012). The narratives of marginalized groups (e.g., PWDs) are typically unheard due to oppression by dominant groups. As a result, marginalized groups are faced with negative stereotypes and stigma from people who belong to the mainstream culture. Saleebey (1996) argues that personal stories and narratives are significant sources of strengths for such marginalized groups. A Strengths Perspective could help decrease negative stereotypes and stigma associated with PWDs by identifying and enhancing their inherent strengths and sharing them with the mainstream culture.

Carruthers and Hood (2007) note that the therapeutic recreation industry presents a strong opportunity for “supporting clients to create a life of meaning, in spite of challenges and limitations” (p. 276). They advocate for a strengths-based approach. However, Carruthers and Hood (2007) argue that there is a need for theory-based support, as opportunities to support “clients” in creating a life of meaning are underrepresented in therapeutic recreation literature. They provide the Leisure and Well-
**Being Model.** Well-Being is defined as, “a state of successful, satisfying and productive engagement with one’s life and the realization of one’s full physical, cognitive, and social-emotional potential” (Carruthers & Hood, 2007, p. 279). The purpose of the Leisure and Well-Being Model is to operate as a service delivery model for therapeutic recreation. The model focuses on two major areas – enhancing leisure experience and developing resources (Carruthers & Hood, 2007, p. 278). The model uses two mechanisms through which well-being is fostered. Firstly, it increases the value of the leisure experience by developing resources, building positive emotion, and nurturing the “client’s” potential. Secondly, it provides “psycho-educational” interventions that enable more resources (see Appendix C). These mechanisms allow therapeutic recreation practitioners to help clients with the formation of a life of continuous personal development and contributions (Hood & Carruthers, 2007). The Leisure and Well-Being Model is presumed to assist therapeutic recreation practitioners make decisions regarding their practice. As a service delivery model, it serves to legitimize strengths-based approaches for PWDs (Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Carruthers and Hood (2007) believe it can help “clients”, their families, and health care professionals understand the meaning and value of therapeutic recreation by providing language that reflects the outcomes and processes that are consistent with the Strengths Perspective (Voelkl, Carruthers, & Hawkins, 1997). In doing so, a strengths-based approach provides the opportunity to cultivate the “full potential” of the “client”, the practitioner and the profession of therapeutic recreation (Baker, Greenberg & Hemingway, 2006).

Anderson and Heyne (2012) also argue that a strengths-based approach is

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10 Part II of the Leisure and Well-Being Model. The article extends Carruthers & Hood’s 2007 research, but was published as a separate article under Hood & Carruthers, 2007. Refer to references.
necessary for therapeutic recreation. They build on Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) argument by stressing that a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation requires an assessment tool. They argue that a strengths-based assessment requires new evaluation methods in addition to modifying existing ones. Anderson and Heyne (2012) use their *Flourishing through Leisure Model* (Anderson & Heyne, 2012), based on the *Leisure and Well-Being Model* (Carruthers & Hood, 2007) as an organizational context to introduce a strengths-based assessment. The *Flourishing through Leisure Model* is founded on the six domains of human functioning: leisure, psychological/emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and spiritual (p. 96). The strengths-based assessment uses an ecological approach to suggest, “participants are a part of their larger environments” (p. 96).

Anderson and Heyne (2012) argue that a therapeutic recreation specialist must learn about the participant in addition to all contexts of his/her social life. The therapeutic recreation specialist must then work with the participant to identify his/her strengths and the strengths and accessible resources within the participant’s social and physical environments. Anderson and Heyne (2012) list tools to address each of the six domains of human functioning (see Appendix D); however, they stress that it is not important which assessment tool is used; the therapeutic recreation specialist must, however, understand how and why a tool is used.

Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) attempt to legitimize a strengths-based approach by providing a delivery model and assessment model specifically for therapeutic recreation. Because the majority of research regarding recreation for PWDs uses a deficit perspective, the research by Carruthers and Hood, (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) is particularly relevant to my thesis.
These articles build on concepts that align with the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984). Anderson and Heyne (2012) use an ecological approach for their strengths-based assessment. As previously mentioned, the aim of the therapeutic recreation specialist in the Flourishing through Leisure Model (Anderson & Heyne, 2012) is to attempt to understand the interactions between the participant and his/her social and physical environment in order to help the participant find his/her strengths. The Flourishing through Leisure Model thus implies that the participant is simultaneously shaping and being shaped by his/her environment. However, the model fails to note how or why the participant and his/her social and physical environment may shape the therapeutic recreation specialist, aligning with the concept of “black box” (Sibthrob et al., 2007).

Conversely, Carruthers and Hood (2007) recognize that language and a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation have the potential to cultivate “the full potential of the clients it serves, the practitioner, and the profession itself” (Baker et al., 2006 as cited in Carruthers and Hood, 2007, p. 278). They thus imply that all individuals involved in a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation have the opportunity to shape and to be shaped by the accompanying processes.

Continuing to indirectly draw upon aspects related to the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984), Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) both acknowledge the importance of working with PWDs to identify resources within their environment. Anderson and Heyne (2012) argue that helping PWDs recognize their physical, social and spiritual resources is crucial to assessing their strengths and well-being. Similarly, Carruthers and Hood (2007) argue that the development of resources is essential to support a person’s well-being. They classify resources as physical, cognitive,
psycho-social, and environmental.

Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) also refer to hope in their respective models. Carruthers and Hood (2007) argue that, “the [Leisure and Well-Being Model], with a foundation in strengths-based practice, encourages a partnership relationship between clients and therapists, in which the therapist encourages hope and inspires change…” (p. 282). They use the term hope (although limited) in the context of hoping for something (i.e., aspirations) as contrasted with Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope as “hope in” a shared future. Carruthers and Hood (2007) do not offer a clear definition of hope or expand on its relationship with a strengths-based approach. Anderson and Heyne (2012) note that, “instilling hope and building strengths are keys to the effectiveness of the helping relationship…” (p. 90). Similarly, they do not clarify their definition of hope. However, Anderson and Heyne (2012) do suggest that therapeutic recreation specialists use *The HOPE Questions* (Anandarajah & Hight, 2001) to assess the spiritual domains of participants (referring to spiritual resources mentioned earlier). The *HOPE Questions* are delivered through an interview to evaluate, “a participant’s sources of hope, role of organized religion, personal spirituality, and effects of spirituality on treatment decisions” (Anderson & Heyne, 2012, p. 101). My concern with the *HOPE Questions* is that this approach frames hope in a religious context, which may alienate people who do not subscribe to a religion. Moreover, the *HOPE Questions* focus on the participant’s treatment decisions, which aligns with adopting a medical model of disability. Hope remains an unexplored concept in therapeutic recreation for PWDs, especially in terms of its relationship with a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996).
Although Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) acknowledge the potential of a strengths-based approach for therapeutic recreation, their research remains theoretical and lacks empirical evidence, such as the lived experiences of PWDs. As previously mentioned, personal stories and narratives are significant sources of strengths (Saleebey, 1996). However, Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) and Anderson and Heyne’s (2012) strengths-based delivery and assessment models do not draw upon the personal stories of PWDs to support their arguments. The context of Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) research is rooted in health care and services. Carruthers and Hood (2007) refer to PWDs involved in a strengths-based therapeutic recreation program as “clients”, unlike Anderson & Heyne (2012) who uses the term “participants”. Carruthers and Hood (2007) and Anderson and Heyne (2012) inadvertently reinforce the assumption that the only feature distinguishing therapeutic recreation from general recreation is PWDs (Carter & Van Andle, 2011).

**Adopting and assessing a Strengths Perspective.** Saleebey (2011) argues that a strengths-based approach is a discursive experience.

11 Each person is unique. The processes and relationships between the practitioners and the participants can vary. Therefore, a well-staged model with specific outcomes may be ineffective. Saleebey (2011) notes that practitioners must be aware of the participant’s world-relationships, culture, traditions and opportunities that may offer support. Saleebey (2008) notes that strengths are contextual. They may be effective in one situation, but not in another. This requires the practitioners to look at and listen carefully to the participants’ stories for

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11 Saleebey (2011) uses the term discursive experience to represent the conversation between a strengths-based practitioner and the participant. In this context, the conversation is not formalized, but meant to encourage the participant to speak freely about his/her life experiences in an effort to identify strengths.
evidence of resources and skills. Strengths can come in the form of: personal qualities and virtues, knowledge, talents, cultural and personal stories, the community and spirituality (Saleebey, 2008). To find these strengths practitioners need to ask questions that fit within the aforementioned dimensions (see Appendix E) (Saleebey, 2011). When strengths are found or accomplishments made, the practitioner and participant must celebrate “ritually and officially, personally and publicly” (Saleebey, 2011, p. 484).

The quality of the rapport between the practitioner and the participant is essential. It can act as a powerful tool. Saleebey (2011) stresses the importance of believing the participant’s narratives in addition to believing in the participant’s potential as a human-being. The practitioner must appreciate, affirm, and act on the participant’s point of view. According to Saleebey (2011), the experience of working with the participant can also impact the practitioner. In other words, the practitioner has the potential to be transformed by the participant. Saleebey (2011) describes this as a double feedback loop: “from you to client, from client to you” (p. 484).

**Hope.** Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory involves goals, the capability to see pathways to those goals, and the agency ultimately required to follow those pathways to achieve the goals. Using Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory in relation to a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996, 2008, 2011), practitioners and participants work together to move towards Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope in a “shared future”. There are multiple tools to assess Snyder’s hope (e.g., the *Hope Scale*, Snyder et al., 1991 and the *State Hope Scale*, Snyder et al., 1996). The most recent model is the *Revised Snyder Hope Scale* (Shorey et al., 2009 as cited in Buchanon & Lopez, 2013). It is comprised of 18 items that assist in measuring goals, pathways and agentic thinking.
Although limited, previous literature has examined hope in PWDs and athletic performance respectively. Kortte, Gilbert, Gorman and Wegener (2010) found that high-hope people with spinal cord injuries tended to have greater life satisfaction before and after their rehabilitation program. Shogren et al., (2006) found similar results with people with developmental disabilities, but in an education setting. In athletic performance, athletes with greater hope tend to have enhanced physical abilities and overall greater success (Curry et al., 1997). Nonetheless, hope literature for PWDs and athletic performance does not incorporate the role of the practitioner or coach. Literature does not examine if or how the practitioner or coach may have garnered hope based on their interactions with the participant or athlete. Instead research focuses on the person’s (i.e., research participant’s) immediate perceived levels of hope (e.g., Curry et al., 1997; Kortte et al., 2010; Shogren et al., 2006).

**Contributions of Hope to a Strengths Perspective in Sport and Recreation.** As previously mentioned, there is little research examining the relationship between hope and a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) in therapeutic recreation. However, Paraschak (2013a) incorporates practices of hope into the Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) to analyze Aboriginal physical activity and recreation in Canada. In her research, Paraschak (2013a) identifies existing strengths in addition to resources that can be used to increase those strengths. She argues that practices of hope contribute to a further understanding of the Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996). Drawing on Giddens’ (1984) Duality of Structure, Paraschak (2013a) believes that “these practices could ensure that reflexive attention is given to ‘hope in’ a shared community vision wherein all individuals involved are transformed” (p. 232). In this context, Paraschak
(2013a) uses Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope. Paraschak (2013a) illustrates Jacob’s (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope, by noting that, “the development of elite aboriginal athletes can potentially benefit from successful practices and resources made available from the federal Own the Podium program, which supports aspiring Olympic Athletes in Canada” (p. 240). In other words, elite aboriginal athletes can benefit from federal funding, whereas the federal government can benefit by increasing Canada’s athletic representation at the Olympic Games. However, Jacobs (2008) argues that hope can only be fostered if people make themselves available to each other.

Complimentary power relations are thus crucial to a strengths-based approach rooted in practices of hope (Paraschak, 2013a). Paraschak (2013a) acknowledges that power relations are unequal in all social relations, and the unequal allocation of resources through a person’s agency is governed by the “(re)production of rules” (Paraschak, 2013a, p. 232). She argues that in order to create complimentary power relations, the people whose actions shape such rules need to exercise reflexivity and be aware of the potential consequences (Paraschak, 2013a). In doing so, a person in a position of power must incorporate “his/her personal aspirations, but also the consequence of particular choices on various individuals within a ‘broader community of relevance’, with whom a shared vision has been generated” (Paraschak, 2013a, p. 233). Therefore, a strengths-based approach rooted in practices of hope envisions that all people, including those in positions of power, share their strengths and resources within a larger community and vision (Paraschak, 2013a). In other words, people have more opportunities to share and enhance their strengths within a hope-enhancing environment.
Paraschak (2013a) clearly articulates the contribution of hope to a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) in the context of sport and recreation. Practices of hope frame how people should approach their interactions with others. To maximize the benefits of a strengths-based approach with practices of hope, participants\(^\text{12}\) must be open to listening, sharing and the possibility of transformation (Paraschak, 2013a). Paraschak (2013a) draws on the ethical theory of utilitarianism (Kirkwood, 2010) to support her argument. The ethical theory of utilitarianism promotes moral behavior that encourages good while reducing harm (Kirkwood, 2010). Paraschak (2013a) suggests that when transposed with practices of hope, “all people in the community, when exercising their power, opt for the choice that does the least harm to their collective vision about the role of physical activity in their lives” (p. 233).

A strengths-based approach with practices of hope differs from Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) and Anderson and Heyne’s (2012) strengths-based models, which are health care and service centered. They state that therapists and practitioners work with clients and participants to inspire hope (Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Anderson & Heyne, 2012). In this sense, hope is framed as being exclusively for the client or participant as opposed to being a part of a horizontal relationship based in a shared future (Jacobs, 2008; Paraschak, 2013a). It also implies that PWDs (or marginalized groups) are in need of hope, while therapists and practitioners are not.

Paraschak’s (2013a) description of a Hope and Strengths Perspective closely aligns with my theoretical framework and is an extension of a strengths-based approach to physical activity and recreation. A strengths-based approach with

\(^{12}\) Paraschak (2013) uses the terms aboriginals and non-aboriginal allies.
practices of hope has underlying elements of utilitarianism. It does not require practitioners to have some sort of health care or service certification, but rather it emphasizes the importance of understanding within a “broader community of relevance” (Paraschak, 2013a). This approach is thus inclusive, enabling all people involved the potential to strive for and benefit from a mutual vision or future. My thesis will expand on Paraschak’s (2013a) research by using a Hope and Strengths Perspective to explore the experiences of all participants (both PWDs and able-bodied people) within the QQDSP.

Sub-Question 2

*How does the DSAO/QQDSP facilitate Hope and Strengths-based practices?*

Sub-question one focused on a person-centered Hope and Strengths analysis. In this section, I shift the focus to the organization. Organizations are institutions or associations that serve a particular function. They involve the planning and coordinating of people’s actions (e.g., staff members, volunteers and sailors) to achieve a common goal. Organizations are not inanimate structures. They are essentially living systems acting as centers that have the possibility to facilitate the connection of human strengths (Martin, 2007). I argue that the people within an organization, such as the DSAO, have the potential to play a significant role in: (1) shaping people and subsequently being shaped by people, (2) creating a hope-enhancing environment, and (3) enhancing a person’s strengths.

**Empowerment.** Empowerment is a concept used across diverse fields of study. It is an attractive concept within social sciences because it has the potential to advocate for helping others, identifying strengths (rather than problems) and recognizing that social
structures consist of unequal power relations (Cattaneo, Calton & Brosky, 2014).

Cattaneo et al. (2014) argue that although empowerment is an important concept in social justice, it has been overused in literature, which has consequently “diluted the clarity of its meaning” (p. 433). Relevance and power are two essential components of empowerment. However, Cattaneo et al. (2014) note that some literature does not incorporate one or both components into their definition or usage of empowerment (e.g., Boehm & Staples, 2004; Chant, Moes, & Ross, 2009; Peled et al., 2000 as cited in Cattaneo, et al., 2014). Attending to the “relevance” of potentially empowering goals and actions is important because all groups and people are unique. A generically conceived empowering goal or action may not be appropriate for a specific group and thus can serve to further perpetuate unequal power relations. The examination of “power” in empowerment is important because it is used to identify whether power has shifted (Cattaneo et al., 2014).

Cattaneo et al. (2014) refer to the Empowerment Process Model (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010) as a pathway to refine the use of empowerment in literature and in practice. The model was developed by integrating and enhancing decades of literature (e.g., Freire, 2000; Rappaport, 1987, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). In the model, empowerment is identified as “a meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world” (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015, p. 3). The model also refers to empowerment as a process in which

a person who lacks power sets a personally meaningful goal oriented towards increasing power, takes action and makes progress towards that goal, drawing on his or her evolving self-efficacy, knowledge, skills, and community resources and
supports, and observes the impact of his or her actions. (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015, p. 3).

**Empowering Community Organizations.** Saleebey (1996) makes reference to community empowerment as being an element of a Strengths Perspective. He argues that within communities with personal resilience, “there is awareness, recognition, and the use of the assets of most members in the community” (Saleebey, 1996, p. 300). As such, those communities become “enabling niches”, where people are recognized for their abilities and supported in becoming more knowledgeable, in addition to developing relationships within and outside the community (Taylor, 1993 as cited in Saleebey, 1996). Saleebey (1996) highlights Mill’s (1995) *health realization-community empowerment model*. The model is centred on educating and helping people find resilience and knowledge so that they can achieve personal goals and contribute to their community’s strengths (Mills, 1995). Mills (1995) argues that education, support and encouragement can enable people to access their inherent resilience, health, wisdom, intelligence and positive motivation. The purpose of *health-realization and community empowerment* is to first help people identity health within themselves and subsequently to guide them in assisting others within their community to do the same.

Organizations can play a key role in empowering communities (Hardina, 2006; Maton & Salem, 1995). Organizations can represent the communities in which they are situated or they can represent specific groups (e.g., PWDs). Community organizations can enable people, through active participation with others, the opportunity to access

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13 Saleebey (1996) defines resilience as the, “continuing articulation of capacities and knowledge derived through interplay of risks and protections in the world” (p. 299).
power and resources needed to achieve personal goals (Rappaport, 1981). Community organizations are essentially structures that can facilitate a person’s agency. The resources they provide may help a person realize his/her goal. Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) distinguish between *empowering* organizations and *empowered* organizations. Empowering organizations can facilitate participants’ psychological empowerment\(^{14}\), whereas *empowered organizations* use their political power to influence communities.

There is limited literature that examines the characteristics of empowering organizations for PWDs. Wilson et al. (2013) explore the empowerment of people with developmental disabilities within community groups, however they focus on the experiences of able-bodied mentors. Recent research tends to focus on empowering PWDs within the workplace (e.g., Hiranandani, Kumar & Sonpal, 2014; Kirk-Brown & Van Dijk, 2014; Scott, 2014). Nonetheless, the aforementioned research does not refer to “relevance”, “power” or both, thus aligning with Cattaneo et al.’s (2014) critique of the term. Maton and Salem (1995) explored the characteristics of organizations that empower communities, and specifically psychological empowerment. They do not focus wholly on PWDs; rather they perform a comparative analysis of a religious fellowship, a mutual help organization for persons with severe mental illness, and an educational program for African American students. They recognize the uniqueness of the organizations in addition to identifying commonalities. While conceptual models of empowering organizations exist (e.g., Hardina, 2006), Maton and Salem’s (1995) analysis reveals characteristics that contain elements of a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Jacobs, 2005,

\[\text{Maton and Salem (1995) define psychological empowerment as, “the active, participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one's life and accomplish important life goals” (p. 632).}\]
2008; Paraschak, 2013a; Saleebey, 1996; Snyder, 2002). These elements will be
highlighted later. Maton and Salem (1995) argue that there are four common
characteristics of empowering community organizations: (1) a group-based belief system,
(2) an opportunity role structure, (3) a support system and (4) leadership.

**Group-based belief system.** A belief system can be identified through an
organization’s ideology, values and culture. Its purpose is to recommend desired
behaviors in order to guide members toward achieving organizational goals (Maton &
Salem, 1995). Belief systems thus shape organizational structures and practices by
providing goals and norms that may motivate members and/or shape their behavior.
Maton and Salem (1995) categorize empowering organizations’ group-based belief
systems as inspiring growth, being strengths-based, and focusing beyond the self. They
describe the inspiring of growth as a “personally challenging and motivating aspect of the
belief system that clearly defines salient goals and means of reaching those goals” (p.
640). Belief systems use a strengths-based approach to recognize that each member has
the capacity (i.e., strengths and resources) to achieve personal goals and to make valuable
contributions in their community. Maton and Salem (1995) also found that empowering
organizations “look beyond themselves”, encouraging their members to adopt a universal
outlook, where they are a part of a larger “humanity-based” mission.

**Opportunity role structure.** Opportunity role structure is the availability and
arrangement of meaningful roles for community members within an organization. Maton
and Salem (1995) found that opportunity roles foster a person’s development and
participation. As such, meaningful roles promote empowerment by actively helping
members achieve personal goals while concurrently increasing their skill-sets (Maton &
Rappaport (1981) categorizes roles as either recipient or provider. Recipient roles can enhance a member’s instrumental and psychological capabilities, whereas provider roles can enhance a member’s self-efficacy by using their skills to help others and contribute to the organization. Maton and Salem (1995) note that within all three organizations’ (e.g., the religious fellowship, the mutual help organization for persons with severe mental illness, and the educational program for African American students) opportunity structures are pervasive, accessible and multifunctional. Many different roles within the organizations are available with varying degrees of responsibility and importance. The role structure contained opportunities for skill development and utilization.

**Support systems.** Support systems are social support resources within an organization. They contribute to a person’s quality of life and coping strategies when faced with stressful circumstances (Maton & Salem, 1995). An organizational support system can empower people who have little power in the broader society. Maton and Salem (1995) found that all three organizations encompass numerous types and sources of support. All three organizations’ members give and receive support from peers. Maton and Salem (1995) note that peer-support is likely because members share a common worldview, goal or identity. In the case of the mutual help organization for people with mental illness, the organization’s formal structures provide members with a longer organizational history the opportunity to act as role models and foster hope within new members (Maton & Salem, 1995).

**Leadership.** Leadership pertains to a person’s qualities. Such individuals may have informal or formal responsibility within an organization (Maton & Salem, 1995).
Leaders may be able to empower members directly or indirectly through small group leaders who have regular contact with other organizational members. Maton and Salem (1995) found that all three organizations have leaders who are inspirational, talented, sharing-oriented and committed. They also were considered role models because they shared life experiences with members and demonstrated success within and outside the organization. Maton and Salem (1995) note that the leaders were able to work well with members, organize resources and support organizational change and stability. Decision-making within the organizations is decentralized. Leaders encouraged member participation and input.

Maton and Salem’s (1995) analysis suggests that the aforementioned organizational characteristics are foundational to empowerment. The strengths of Maton and Salem’s (1995) analysis are that it has elements of a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Paraschak, 2013a; Saleebey, 1996; Snyder, 2002) underpinned by the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984). Firstly, all the characteristics (e.g., group-based belief systems, opportunity role structures, support systems and leadership) highlight how organizations work with members to identify, enhance, and utilize their strengths. Secondly, Maton and Salem (1995) found that group-based belief systems encourage members to adopt a universal outlook, where they are a part of a larger “humanity-based” mission. This belief parallels Jacobs’s (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope as being “social in nature” and linked to a “shared future”. Thirdly, the characteristics align with Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory. Members’ actions are goal directed, wherein the organization’s group-based belief and support systems provide pathways that enable members to achieve personal and organizational goals. Opportunity role structures
facilitate members’ agency. Lastly, in keeping with the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984), Maton and Salem’s analysis reveals how the organizations are shaped by and shape members. Group-based belief systems shape organizational structures, which can subsequently shape members’ behaviors. Moreover, opportunity role structures, support systems and leadership enable members to play a role in shaping each other and the organization.

**Organizational culture.** Culture is an important aspect of an organization. It is made up of, and can shape the attitudes and behaviors that guide the actions of its members. Culture is based on a set of shared values and a mutual understanding of how an organization operates (Sniderman et al., 2010). Schein (1992) defines culture as shared assumptions that are learned by a group as it copes with external adaptation and internal integration.

Schein (1992) notes that an organization may have multiple functioning cultures: a managerial culture that is associated with governance, a group culture that is based on geographical proximity, and a worker culture that is based on shared experiences. The organization as a whole may also have a culture if it has a significant history. Schein (1992) argues that culture is strongest when implicit and explicit assumptions align. Cole (1997) contends that explicit culture is the manifestation of the organization’s official communication structure (e.g., mission statement); whereas implicit culture is what the organization’s members believe is most important.

Stories have the potential to reinforce the values of the organization. They can convey meaning and identity to an organization, which may assist new members in orienting themselves (Martin & Frost, 2011). Rituals are practices that an organization
repeats on a daily basis. They are usually informal rules that dictate the way things are
done within the organization (Sniderman et al., 2010). In doing so, a culture’s informal
(and formal) rules form a structure, which facilitates members’ actions.

Saleebey (2011) argues that organizational culture should be fostered around
positivity and accomplishment, suggesting that accomplishments should be celebrated
ritually and publicly. He outlines how strengths-based practitioners can incorporate a
Strengths Perspective into organizations. Saleebey (2011) advocates for organizational
narratives that document strengths-based practitioners’ and participants’ “heroics,
capacities, leadership, ingenuity, accomplishments and strengths” (p. 484). The stories of
participants should be shared and represented in an organization’s newsletters, bulletin
boards and board meetings. To further capitalize on participants’ strengths, Saleebey
(2011) suggests that participants be invited to participate within the organization, acting
as advisors, mentors, liaisons or outreach workers.

Elements of organizational culture (e.g., Schein, 1992; Sniderman et al, 2010;
of empowerment and Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering
community organizations. Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering
community organizations can be directly applied to the DSAO and the QQQDSP.

Disability culture. Dupre (2012) notes that despite the importance of cultural diversity in
social work, there is little literature that explores disability culture. Disability culture was
developed through the disability arts movement’s positive representation of PWDs
(Dupre, 2012). Disability culture, like any culture, includes history, art, humour, symbols,
beliefs, values and narratives. It encompasses more than just a shared experience of
oppression (Dupre, 2012). Disability culture differentiates itself from mainstream culture because it highlights positive representations of difference (Longmore, 1995). However, Galvin (2003) argues that disability culture is a paradox. It can reinforce a marginalized status and exclusionary practices for PWDs; it can also foster a positive identity.

Some social work interventions attempt to “normalize” PWDs in contrast to the contributions of early disability scholarship (e.g., Social Model of Disability, Oliver, 1992). Dupre (2012) argues that some social workers use elements from a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) and empowerment theory to assimilate PWDs into mainstream culture. She explains “assimilation through a politics of integration does not hold much transformative potential for disability culture when cultural imperialism [by the dominant culture]… plays a significant role in the oppression of disabled people” (Dupre, 2012, p. 179). In this sense, Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of hope in a “shared future” should not be understood in terms of conformity to the dominant culture.

Social work practices must acknowledge and support the diversity and strengths of disability culture (Dupre, 2012). Dupre (2012) emphasizes that according to Saleebey (1996), a Strengths Perspective can affirm culture as a source of inspiration, positive identity, stability, meaning, healing and transformation.

Inclusive versus segregated recreation programs for PWDs. Literature has explored PWDs’ motivations for choosing to participate in either inclusive or segregated recreation programs (e.g., Anderson & Kress, 2003; Fennick & Royle, 2003; Mayer & Anderson, 2014). However, little research has examined the culture within these different types of organizations. One philosophy is that PWDs require segregated programs to accommodate their perceived skill levels and physical abilities (Fennick & Royle, 2003).
In contrast, Mayer and Anderson (2014) note that researchers (e.g., Anderson & Kress, 2003) and recreation professionals advocate for inclusive recreation programs as a way to enhance PWDs’ participation in society. Nonetheless, segregated programs are numerous and continue to be used by PWDs, despite inclusive programs’ growth and promotion (Mayer & Anderson, 2014). Mayer and Anderson (2014) found that PWDs sometimes participate in both segregated and inclusive programs. PWDs in segregated programs justify their participation based on the program’s focus on skill-building and fair competition. Conversely, PWDs in inclusive programs explain that such programs create more opportunities for PWDs and able-bodied people to socialize and learn from each other (Mayer & Anderson, 2014). Mayer and Anderson (2014) conclude that inclusive recreation programs should incorporate more skill-building for PWDs and reduce the emphasis on competition.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I review my research methods, my study’s reliability and validity and its limitations and delimitations.

Methods

Sampling Methods. There are several factors that influenced my selection of the QQDSP for my study. Firstly, the QQDSP is the largest chapter of DSAO, with a sizeable membership. Secondly, it has a well-established organizational history. Some participants have been involved with the QQDSP since its inception in 1999. Lastly, I have experience working with the QQDSP. I gained experiential knowledge that contributes to my understanding of the QQDSP and its participants. My experience with the QQDSP
has allowed me to build trust with participants while being sensitive to their needs. My units of analysis are the QQDSP’s organizational structures and its participants\textsuperscript{15}.

**Participant Selection and Profiles.** Participants are categorized as staff members\textsuperscript{16}, volunteers\textsuperscript{17} and sailors\textsuperscript{18}. The categorization of participants will enable me to explore multiple perspectives and behaviours that occur within the QQDSP (Creswell, 2009). I had a preliminary conversation with the commodore (i.e., president) of the DSAO about the details of my study. The commodore gave me permission to recruit staff members, volunteers and sailors, pending ethics.

After receiving Research Ethics Board (REB) clearance from the University of Windsor, I directly contacted staff members and the commodore through e-mail (see Appendix F). They previously shared their contact information with me knowing that I would later contact them for the purposes of my study. I also directly contacted the DSAO’s secretary through e-mail. The DSAO secretary’s e-mail is publicly available on the DSAO’s website. I was able to recruit an additional eight participants through snowball sampling.

According to Markula and Silk (2011) the number of participants required in qualitative studies varies. However, the number of participants necessary to answer the research question is an important consideration (Markula & Silk, 2011). They suggest that a total of 10 participants may be appropriate for a master thesis (Markula & Silk, 2011). I conducted 12 interviews with the QQDSP’s participants (e.g., staff members,

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\textsuperscript{15} \textit{I refer to participants as being staff members, volunteers and sailors because they are all participating in some way within the QQDSP during the sailing season (May-August).}

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{I define staff members as paid able-bodied employees who have specific roles (e.g., office manager or dock crew). All staff members are able-bodied.}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{I define volunteers as unpaid members of the QQDSP. Volunteers can be BOD members, companion sailors or both. PWDs and able-bodied people can be volunteers.}

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{I define sailors as paying members of the QQDSP. They are PWDs.}
volunteers and sailors). The QQDSP has approximately 60 sailing members (not including Outreach Groups) and 20 volunteers. The QQDSP’s sailors have a wide range of disabilities, from physical to developmental. Due to the vulnerability of people with developmental disabilities and consent issues, interviews were only conducted with people with physical disabilities. I conducted eight interviews by telephone and two interviews through Skype. I asked participants to share a photograph that best represents their experience within the QQDSP and speak to its meaning. Two participants (a volunteer and a sailor who also volunteers) preferred to type their responses to my questions into a Word document. They sent their response to me via e-mail.

Two staff members, six sailors and four volunteers were interviewed. The majority of interviews were with sailors with disabilities because they are the QQDSP’s key stakeholders. Some sailors sail independently without the assistance of a volunteer companion. These independent sailors sometimes act as volunteer companions for sailors who require assistance. Thus, sailors’ and volunteers’ responses sometimes overlap.

Two volunteers interviewed are BOD members (e.g., the commodore and the secretary). The commodore provides leadership to the BOD and is responsible for managing the strategic planning of the DSAO. The secretary maintains and distributes the BOD’s meeting minutes. The other two volunteers are able-bodied people. The sailors who also volunteer were categorized as sailors because they initially learned to sail within the QQDSP before acting as volunteer companions.

I also interviewed two staff members. There are four staff members (e.g., program manager [me], office manager, and two dock crew) who facilitate the operations of the QQDSP during the sailing season. I interviewed the office manager and one dock
crewmember. Staff members interact with volunteers and sailors daily. The office manager administers operations such as membership registration and sail bookings. The dock crewmembers assist with rigging the sailboats and transferring participants with mobility issues in and out of the sailboats.

**Methodology**

**Photographs.** During the recruitment process, I asked participants to e-mail me a digital copy of a photograph that best represents their experience within the QQDSP. They were asked to speak to the photograph at the beginning of the interview. Six participants shared their photographs. Four participants did not have a photograph readily available. These four chose to describe the memory of their photographs rather than to choose a photograph from the DSAO’s online album. The two participants who typed their responses to the interview guide’s questions did not provide a photograph. Their responses were not as detailed in comparison to the other participants who shared or described a photograph. However, this may also be because I was unable to verbally ask probing questions to the two participants who shared their responses via email.

Harrington and Lindy (1999) suggest that participants tend to elicit more profound thinking when asked to reflect on their photographs rather than just participating in an interview. Photography as a qualitative method has been used in recent studies with PWDs (Gibson et al., 2013; King et al., 2014). Singhal and Rattine-Flaherty (2006) suggest that the strength of photography as a qualitative method is its inherent subjectivity. It allows the researcher to better view participants’ experience from a picture that they may have taken or a photograph that speaks to their experience.
The photographs that participants shared and/or described related to their overall experiences within the QQDSP. Although participants had difficulty recognizing their strengths, descriptions of the photographs assisted participants in recalling their experiences in addition to answering the interview guide’s questions. Descriptions of photographs coupled with my probing questions allowed participants to identify their strengths. The actual photographs or descriptions of the photographs and its contents were not as important to my study as compared to the photographs’ abilities to prompt insightful reflections from participants. Therefore, although four participants did not have a photograph readily available, their reflections and responses were just as profound in comparison to participants who shared an actual photograph. I believe photograph elicitation was an effective method, especially since interviews were conducted during the winter. It incited memories related to the summer sailing season. I did not include participants’ photographs into an appendix because of consent issues (see recommendations section in Chapter 6 for further discussion). Some participants shared photographs of themselves with other participants and people, from whom I did not have consent.

**Interviews.** Interviews are frequently used in qualitative research to “solicit an individual’s feelings, experiences or knowledge(s)” (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 81). Semi-structured interviews are a one-to-one interaction where participants are asked a series of open-ended questions. This method allows for new ideas, constructed by a participant’s responses, to be further explored by the researcher (Kirby et al., 2006). I used probes as appropriate for each question to help explore ideas found in my literature review. The
responses from the two participants who chose to e-mail me their responses were not semi-structured because we did not engage in a verbal conversation.

I acknowledge that it might be difficult for some participants to operationalize hope and to reflect on their strengths. Therefore, the interview guide was sent to participants one week in advance. I did this to ensure that participants had time to reflect upon and prepare their responses. One interview guide was used for all participants (see Appendix G). Prior to starting the interview, all participants were asked if they read the consent form (see Appendix H) and if they had any questions about my study. When participants agreed to participate I informed them when I started audio recording and asked for verbal consent for my records. I received written consent through e-mail from the two participants who chose to type their responses. I reviewed their written responses and asked them to clarify some of their thoughts.

To answer my first sub-question: *How does a Hope and Strengths perspective explain the QQDSP’s participants’ experiences?* I interviewed staff members, volunteers and sailors to understand their experiences within the QQDSP. I chose to interview all categories of participants because: (1) some sailors with disabilities concurrently act as volunteer companions and BOD members, and (2) Jacobs (2005, 2008) recognizes that hope is social in nature, “wrapped in the web of social relations that each of us inhabits” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 785). Specifically, I first examined if and how participants develop new strengths, enhance existing strengths and use these strengths within the QQDSP. I then examined the elements of Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory (e.g., goals, pathways and agency) and Jacobs’ (2005, 2008) conceptualization of “hope in” a shared future.
To answer my second sub-question: *How does the DSAO/QQDSP facilitate Hope and Strengths-based practices?* I drew upon Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of an empowering community organization (e.g., group-belief system, opportunity role structure, support systems and leadership). I interviewed all participants to document their perceptions in relation to the QQDSP’s empowering characteristics. I also probed to assess how the QQDSP is perceived to contribute to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992).

I pilot tested the interview guide with two participants (a sailor and a volunteer) who are involved with Experience Disabled Sailing Windsor, an adaptive sailing program operated by the DSAO at the LaSalle Mariners Yacht Club (LMYC). The pilot test interviews enabled me to enhance my skills as an interviewer. Information from the pilot interviews is not used in my study. All participants from the QQDSP were informed during the recruitment process and prior to the start of the interview, that if they choose to participate, information from the interviews will not be confidential and I cannot guarantee their anonymity. However, I provided participants the option of using their true name or a pseudonym. Two participants opted to use a pseudonym, while 10 participants chose to use their true names. The interviews can act as a tool to empower participants by providing a method to capture their experiences with their own words, while emphasizing and appreciating the value of their knowledge (Saleebey, 1996).

The interview process was not unidirectional. Rather, the participants and I learned from each other\(^\text{19}\). The interviews acted as an intervention in several ways. Firstly, some participants thanked me for giving them the opportunity to participate in my

\(^{19}\) Parascak (2013a) argues that practices of hope require individuals to be committed to hearing and sharing each other’s perspectives, in addition to being open to the possibility of transformation as a part of their commitment to a shared future (p. 240).
study. They explained that they have never had the chance to take the time to reflect on their experiences within the QGDSP. Secondly, some participants described learning about their strengths through the interview process.

My existing relationships with the QGDSP’s participants are built on trust and shared experience. I believe that my experience working with the QGDSP allowed me to solicit honest and thoughtful responses from participants. Furthermore, my experience working with the QGDSP enhanced my understanding of participants’ narratives because I could visualize what they were talking about. My experience within the QGDSP also allowed me to ask probing questions related to their experiences. For example, most participants had difficulty identifying their strengths. I was able to ask probing questions based on my knowledge of sailing and how the QGDSP operates. My probing questions were not leading questions. Instead, they helped prompt participants to reflect.

Digital copies of participants’ photographs were saved to my password-protected laptop computer. I conducted telephone and Skype interviews in the Human Kinetics building at the University of Windsor. Telephone and Skype interviews were conducted on speaker and recorded using a digital recording device. Participants were encouraged to find a private and quiet location for the interviews. The interview audio files were transferred to my password-protected laptop computer and all audio files were deleted from the recording device. I also saved the two participants’ typed responses to my password-protected computer.

**Data Analysis**

**Interviews.** I used thematic analysis to examine the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six steps to doing a thematic analysis: (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2)
generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) producing the report (p. 87). I familiarized myself with my data by reviewing the audio recordings of the participants and transcribing the recordings verbatim into a Word document. The transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo 9. Next, I generated initial codes through a preliminary analysis of the transcriptions. This allowed me to code the entire data set into meaningful groups based on commonalities that were apparent within participants’ responses and in relation to my sub-questions and literature review (i.e., the Hope and Strengths Perspective and characteristics of empowering community organizations). I then organized the codes into potential themes and gathered all the data relevant to those themes. Furthermore, I continually analyzed and refined my themes in order to provide them with clear definitions. Finally, I selected vivid examples for my results.

**Reliability**

Reliability is present when results are consistent with repeated measurement over time (Kirby et al. 2006). Codes have to be clearly defined. Data must be constantly compared with the codes to ensure consistency in the application of the codes during the coding process (Creswell, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest developing a one-page code list with clear definitions for easy reference. I generated a one-page code list based on my theoretical framework and literature review (see Appendix I). The one-page code list provided clear definitions for easy reference and assisted me in analyzing my initial data once it was collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I developed a second code list as I read the transcriptions that built upon and refined upon my initial list (see Appendix J). This approach enabled me to ensure high internal consistency.
Validity

Validity refers to the result’s accurate representation of phenomenon based on evidence (Schwandt, 2001). Triangulation is the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning in order to verify the repeatability of an observation. It also clarifies meaning by identifying the different ways that the phenomenon may be seen (Stake, 2010). In my study, I used photograph elicitation and interviews. Each participant had a unique personal perspective. The convergence of different perspectives from the participant categories added to the validity of my study.

Creswell (2009) suggests member checking with participants to determine if they find the results accurate. I e-mailed each participant a draft of my results section. I asked participants to respond within a week due to the short time frame of the latter half of my study. I informed them that I would assume participants agree with the accuracy of my results if they do not respond within a week. No participants responded to my member checking e-mails.

I used detailed descriptions that connect to my theory to explain my results. The rich, thick descriptions allow readers to relate to the setting and experiences through my discussion. Detailed quotes from the various participants’ perspectives helped to frame the results more realistically (Creswell, 2009).

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality acknowledges the impact of a researcher’s experiences, assumptions and relationships with the research participants and area of study on the research process. As such, researcher positionality frames the researcher’s representation of him/herself within his/her research through a process of reflective and critical thinking.
(Kirby et al., 2006). Qualitative researchers promote reflexivity and transparency by declaring their positionality and any possible impacts of this positionality on those who are involved (Kirby et al., 2006). It was important for me to reflect on my background because my lived experiences shaped all stages of the research project including selecting my topic, developing the interview guide and my interpretation of the data and results. I included my reflections (i.e., conceptual baggage, Kirby & McKenna, 1989) to clarify my positionality (see Appendix K).

**Directional Propositions**

**Sub-question 1.** I believe that all participants are shaping and being shaped by their experiences within the QQDSP\(^{20}\). I expect that participants, with help from each other and the QQDSP, have been able to identify, enhance and use their strengths to accomplish goals within and outside the QQDSP. Throughout my experience with the QQDSP, several sailors indicated that they enjoy the QQDSP because they are treated like a person as opposed to a “patient”, thus I expect that participants may prefer outdoor recreation, such as the QQDSP, as an alternative to a therapeutic recreation program rooted in a health care and services setting.

**Sub-question 2.** Based on my preliminary observations, I believe that the QQDSP has distinctive cultural practices, shaped by the DSAO’s history and participants’ stories. I expect that the QQDSP’s organizational culture empowers some participants more than others. I believe that sailors with disabilities have the potential to experience the highest levels of empowerment. They have the opportunity to act as volunteer companions for sailors with more severe disabilities. They also have the opportunity to become BOD

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\(^{20}\) Refers to the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984).
members. Furthermore, they have opportunities to take friends and family sailing. I believe these opportunities enable sailors to share their inherent strengths within the QQDSP’s community.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

My research is delimited to the QQDSP. I chose to focus solely on the QQDSP because it is the largest and most established chapter of the DSAO. The DSAO’s other chapter, BAS, is less established and limits its operation to July and August.

My decision to solely focus on the QQDSP has potential limitations. I recognize that participants of other adaptive sailing programs may have different sailing experiences and other adaptive sailing programs may have different ways of operating. My thesis is not generalizing about adaptive sailing programs or sport and recreation for PWDs. Instead, it is contributing to an understanding of outdoor recreation programs for PWDs and their participants’ experiences (both PWDs and able-bodied people), framed within a Hope and Strengths Perspective.

Another delimitation is the non-confidentiality of participants’ interviews. As previously mentioned, confidentiality would be difficult to maintain due to the relatively small size of the QQDSP and the ease with which staff and BOD members could be identified through the DSAO’s website.

A resulting limitation may be that participants altered or limited their responses knowing that they could be identified. However, I believe that our shared involvement in the program over the summer and my framing of the photograph elicitations and interviews from a Hope and Strengths Perspective prompted honest and thorough responses.
I chose to delimit interviews to participants who are able to clearly communicate and who do not have developmental disabilities. My rationale for this decision is to avoid any miscommunication or consent issues.

A resulting limitation to my participant selection is that participants with developmental disabilities did not have the opportunity to share their experiences. Thus, the exploration of multiple perspectives and behaviours that occur within the QQDSP are not fully represented. I recognize that the aforementioned participants’ experiences are equally as valuable as other participants’ experiences. A further limitation is the difference between verbally interviewing participants and having participants type their responses to the interview guide’s questions. During the verbal interviews I was able to ask probing questions to prompt participants to reflect on their experiences, while asking participants probing questions via e-mail after receiving their typed responses did not have the same effect.

I delimited my methods to interviews coupled with photograph elicitation to analyze the experiences of staff members, volunteers and sailors.

A resulting limitation was a narrow band of triangulation because: (1) the small sample of staff members, (2) volunteers’ and sailors’ profiles were similar, and (3) interviews were the primary method.

I delimited interviews to a sample of 12 participants. Markula and Silk (2011) suggest a total of 10 participants may be appropriate for a master thesis (Markula & Silk, 2011). Due to time constraints, I believe that interviewing, transcribing and analyzing the data of 12 participants was acceptable.
A resulting limitation is that my findings are not generalizable to all populations. A sample of 12 participants is not sufficient to draw conclusions about the experiences of participants within an outdoor recreation program for PWDs, specifically an adaptive sailing program. Nonetheless, I uphold that the findings from my study have the potential to provide a foundation for future studies and organizations to analyze and implement hope and strengths-based practices.

Lastly, my subjectivity may be perceived as a limitation due to my active involvement with the QQDSP. Paraschak (2013b) supports subjectivity as central to knowledge production. She argues that perceived “objective” facts could be interpreted differently depending on the cultural context of a group. I decided to work with the QQDSP so that I could develop a “subjective vocabulary of experiences” (Paraschak, 1996). Although I do not have a disability, I endeavored to understand participants’ experiences from their perspectives, so that I could eventually better represent their “truth” (i.e., enhance validity) (Paraschak, 2013b). My active involvement enabled me to conceptualize my research questions, while sharing my strengths with the QQDSP and its participants (Paraschak, 1996).

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The results of the data analysis are framed within a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) underpinned by the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984). I identify how participants (see Appendix K for participants’ profiles) shape and are
being shaped by each other and the DSAO/QQDSP. First, I address how participants\(^\text{21}\) joined the QQDSP. I then illustrate participants’ overall experiences\(^\text{22}\) to highlight the QQDSP’s positive impacts. Next, I outline the group-based beliefs that are shared within the DSAO/QQDSP. In keeping with the conceptualizations of hope (e.g., Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Snyder 2002), I then describe participants’ goals\(^\text{23}\) and the relationship of these goals to participants’ overall experiences. Later, I use a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) to illustrate how participants’ strengths\(^\text{24}\) contributed towards their goals (i.e., hope) and overall experiences. Finally, I identify resources within the DSAO/QQDSP that enhanced participants’ strengths and assisted in the realization of their goals.

The timeline of participants’ experiences span from their first time sailing until the conclusion of the 2014 sailing season. Many sailors with disabilities additionally volunteered as companion sailors and/or BOD members. In the results, they are identified as sailors who also volunteer, unless a sailor has a specific volunteer title. Since the conclusion of the 2014 sailing season, some of the interviewed sailors have joined the BOD. Their BOD experiences were not examined because they did not occur prior to the 2014 sailing season.

I recognize that although participants’ overall experiences were described as positive, there were certain situations within their experiences that were perceived to be challenging.

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\(^\text{21}\) I define participants as any individual involved with the DSAO/QQDSP (e.g., sailors, volunteers or staff members).
\(^\text{22}\) I define experiences as the lived situations that occur within the QQDSP.
\(^\text{23}\) I define goals as participants’ desires to realize specific experiences.
\(^\text{24}\) I define strengths as abilities that enable participants to achieve goals that contribute to specific experiences.
Awareness of the QQDSP

Staff members and a volunteer learned about the QQDSP through job postings and a volunteer recruitment website. Sailors joined the QQDSP through recommendations from friends, health service workers, other participants, or other recreation programs. Most participants were unaware that a program like the QQDSP existed. Candi, a sailor said:

My [occupational therapist] happened to be kayaking at the canoe club right beside the QQDSP. I guess she had heard that I used to be a sailor and she was like “oh, have you ever thought of going to the disabled sailing program?” and I had no idea that there was such an animal.

Allan, a sailor described accidently learning about the QQDSP:

I accidently stumbled across it one day. Me and my buddy were on the docks one day.... We came across it; my friend was talking to somebody who worked there at the time. This is way back in ‘99....They said to me, yeah you can go sailing. So I signed up for lessons and I learned to sail.

Volunteer 1 explained how he learned about the QQDSP from a friend:

I was visiting a friend one day in 2002. He was 75 years old and completely paralyzed on the left side of his body. I asked him what he was going to do the rest of the day. He said he was going sailing at QQDSP. I asked him if I could join him.

I did. That was the start of my 12 year involvement in QQDSP.

Nikko, a sailor and volunteer said he learned about the QQDSP from another program:
I was skydiving and learned about the program from another former skydiver. After I stopped skydiving, I needed to do something new I’d never done so I decided to take up sailing.

Overall Experience

All interviewed participants indicated that their overall experiences were positive. Participants commonly described feelings of independence and a sense of community when reflecting on their overall experiences. Participants chose photographs that highlighted these feelings.

**Freedom and independence.** The majority of sailors and one able-bodied volunteer referred to the freedom they felt while sailing. They explained that sailing enabled them to relax, enjoy the outdoors and escape anything that may be troubling them. Candi, a sailor, described her experience as “life altering”. She went on to explain, “It has given me back a lot of freedom; a lot of sense of independence, joy and it has just given me back the confidence that I was just so lacking after the first few years of my accident”. Jay, a sailor who often sails with Candi, said, “We just have a very relaxing time out there. We get out on the water and we forget everything that is troubling us”. Similarly, Volunteer 1 explained, “Sailing is for me the most enjoyable activity. It makes me feel free and away from the pressures of life”.

Participants also described the enjoyment of being in control. Ann, a sailor, volunteer and BOD member, said:

Taking control of your own life enjoyment is really important. Sometimes when you have to be assisted to do a lot of things and you’re told what to do and your doctors are giving orders, your life always seems to be in the hands of others .... I hope that
the experience of sailing, as it did with me, gives back some of the autonomy to others.

Kevin, a sailor, explained:

*When you’re in the boat, your physical limitations don’t really exist through the assistive technology. You’re out of your chair and doing your own thing…. You are completely under control…. I think that is one of the first things that you really recognize after sustaining a disability…. The independence and self-control that you had has been robbed. But when you get into a sailboat…. when you are sailing independently….It is complete liberation. And you’re back in control. Which is amazing.*

Krista, a sailor, confirmed the feeling of being in control when she described her experience:

*I got to the point where I got my independent sailing privileges, so I got to go out on the lake and sail and you know….I can walk a bit with a walker, but there is no grace, there is no speed. It takes all the effort that I can muster up to walk with a walker…. But when I am out on the lake on a sailboat, I feel like I am dancing ballet…. It just gives me the creativity to move gracefully and to feel like I am actually in control of how I am moving….Sailing is just so easy and it is so natural. I love that feeling.*

**Sense of community.** The majority of participants also emphasized a sense of community when asked about their overall experience. Volunteer 2 said, “*It was a lot of fun. It was great to see the people, almost more than the sailing…. I think that was*
important…. Everyone is very friendly”. Natasha, a staff member, described her experience as “life changing”. She went on to say:

Early on it changed from this is my summer job to I cared so much for how much the program meant to the participants…. I cared so much about them having a great experience and I learned how important it was for these people to participate….to have something that they can excel in, enjoy and be on an equal playing field as anyone else…. So for me I learned so much about people in general and how we need things like that to kind of give ourselves self-esteem and some sense of belonging as well in that community that we have there.

Allan explained that meeting new people contributed to his positive experience:

The people are awesome…. I meet a wide variety of people. Old, disabled, any type of disability. And I got to experience that and see all the types of people that go there. I met someone new everyday.

Ann described her experience as “fantastic”. She went on to say:

The last 15 years, I don’t know what my life would have been like if it wasn’t for sailing…. I have just met so many people. I have had the experience of being on the [BOD] and recruiting and fundraising and just being totally involved.

Sarai, the commodore, said, “What is wonderful about [DSAO] is that it encompasses all levels of abilities, ages, disabilities…. You name it, come one, come all. I really love that about it”. Sarai further explained that seeing the program’s impact on participants kept her focused and shaped her leadership:

It’s the moments where you get to take someone out after your regular workday and they are non-verbal and you get them in the boat and we’re out and all of the
sudden there is the smile…. And you know, like this is what it is about…. Like, it is not just about putting people in boats. There is a social aspect. There is a thing that unifies all of us and it is awesome…. It’s the community engagement; it is what I am seeing from the volunteers…. In the staff that we get every summer. Like we get these kids, for the most part haven’t had an experience with [PWDs]…. And seeing the shaping of the staff…. And for me that is everything and I guess that is why I sit in the commodore position…. It is about just making sure everybody is happy, that everybody is working together.

About the DSAO/QQDSP

Participants identified several common beliefs shared (see Appendix G for interview questions) within the DSAO/QQDSP: 1) the belief in oneself, 2) valuing the experience and 3) teamwork. Participants explained that these beliefs contributed to their understanding about the Social Model of Disability25 (Oliver, 1992) and decreased or eliminated perceived structural, social or self-imposed limitations. The group-based beliefs related to participants’ overall experiences and goals.

Belief in oneself. When asked what he thought was a shared belief, Kevin said, “One thing certainly is the belief in yourself. And that it is possible with your own potential and to erase the idea of limitations, you know”. Similarly Pinky, a staff member, told me:

Just plain and simple, you can do anything as long as you put your mind to it, but also there are barriers in life, but those barriers can be broken down if you just find a way. And the QQDSP believes that everyone should be able to have a good

25 The social model of disability describes impairment as a medical condition (physical or mental) that leads to a “disability”, and disability as being the interaction between a person living with impairment and their environment. It implies that the physical and social environment must transform to facilitate people living with impairments’ full participation in society (Oliver, 1992).
experience and that experience is sailing.

Valuing the experience. Natasha believed that all participants, including her, valued the experience. She said:

I feel like everyone valued the experience. Everyone valued just a really positive day. You know, nothing exceptional happened when we sent someone sailing for two hours and they came back. But at the same time it did. Just having that really fun day on the water. Everyone valued the value of what they were doing. You know, even the volunteers that have done this a million times, they knew this is really important. A lot of the people just loved the community.

Allan confirmed the value of the experience:

We all value the sailing club because that is why we are there.... We all have a mutual goal to get on the water and sail. It is its own little environment down there. It has its own community environment that some places don’t have.... I think everybody feels included.... Feels like they are a part of it.

Teamwork. Ann believed “being helpful and assisting one another and appreciating independence no matter what level that is” was a shared belief. Krista confirmed this belief:

Definitely the spirit of teamwork. That everybody can not only benefit but also contribute to the program, which is nice. So it can be reciprocal, you can give and receive.

She went on to explain why giving back to the QQDSP was important to her:

I think it is so fantastic because a lot of times as someone who is disabled, you tend to be a lot on the receiving end. So the fact that you are both receiving benefit and
giving benefit really is such an empowering thing to one’s person.

Jay told me that events such as Sail Around the Island\textsuperscript{26} exemplify teamwork and the DSAO’s mission:

\begin{quote}
We have the common denominator of the love of sailing. I really like sailing around the island because everybody is out there sailing together and the sun is in your face and you are waving at them and if there is a great wind we are all zipping by each other. You can just see the smile of their face and everybody is smiling….And when we are all sailing together and sticking as a team that is when I really think, yeah, we really are a team.
\end{quote}

**Social Model of Disability.** All participants agreed that the DSAO/QQDSP contributed to the Social Model of Disability. Volunteer 1 said:

\begin{quote}
The fact that many members consider their disability only an inconvenience proves that everything in life is relative. We should keep in mind that everybody has a disability of some sort. I have one and I assume you have too. The difference is it is not always visible or apparent.
\end{quote}

Volunteer 1 went on to say:

\begin{quote}
[PWDs] who are constantly being told they are unable to participate in an activity or sport can find an opportunity in QQDSP to participate in a sport, which is specifically designed for them.
\end{quote}

Staff members and volunteers explained that their perceptions and understanding of disabilities changed. Sailors’ perceptions of disabilities also changed. Kevin described the QQDSP’s location as ideal to showcase the abilities of participants to the public:

\textsuperscript{26} Sail Around the Island is a day trip. Sailors sail as a group around the Toronto Islands.
The location of the Toronto waterfront is perfect. People can see what we are capable of. People are snapping pictures all the time. They are like “wow, that is so cool”. They are usually tourists. “Look at what they got going on in Toronto”. People are standing there in awe. The program breaks down barriers. I am guilty of seeing other people with physical disabilities or mental challenges and after getting to know them I feel a lot more at ease. And that is a great component of the program too.

When describing how the DSAO contributed to the Social Model of Disability, Sarai explained:

*We are all in the same playing ground. Whether a [PWD] is sailing or companioning or whether he or she be able or disabled, just to see that integration is fantastic. I think we as a society tend to focus on people focusing on disability, and how it was acquired…. But I think it is the wrong approach to try to understand disability…. I know it sounds cliché, but we should be focusing on the abilities. What is great about having an equal playing ground…or DSAO having equal volunteering opportunities and sitting in that boat, is that you don’t know that someone has a disability.*

Sarai also emphasized the abilities of Outreach Group sailors and the potential for student volunteers and staff members to spread awareness of the abilities of PWDs within their respective communities:

*As for the program, and what we do, I want DSAO to represent the abilities of its members, including the volunteers. And a big example is the Outreach Groups*

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27 Outreach Groups are comprised of people with developmental disabilities (e.g., Down Syndrome, etc) who are from an assisted-living home or community program.
being able to bring down the safety kits to the boats in the morning. It is their program. It is their club. And it’s teaching the participants to be powerful and to be confident. It is teaching the students that work for us that they are capable of so much more when they leave DSAO. And they are going to spread awareness within their own communities and friendships, saying, “I have friends with disabilities and it is totally normal” .... It is about empowering everyone.

Hope

Participants identified personal goals and goals that contributed to the DSAO’s mission. Common goals related to: 1) participation, 2) skill development, and/or 3) giving back to the community. Participants’ goals were shaped by their initial sailing experiences. Their goals evolved to being more community-oriented as they became increasingly involved within the program. Ultimately, participants’ goals aligned with “hope in 28” a shared future.

Participation. The majority of sailors initially described that their goal was to get on the water. This goal was often paired with the goal of achieving freedom and independence through that experience. Ann said, “At the beginning of my sailing life my goal was just to get out on the water”. Kevin explained, “Last sailing season I wanted to sail my ass off. I wanted to sail as many times as I could and sail a few regattas”. Candi did not think she had any goals. However, when I encouraged her to reflect on her experiences, her responses related to her participation. Candi said:

[Volunteer 1] was the first person to introduce me to the program. We were on the water for like 20 minutes and all of the sudden I started crying because it was the

\[28\] Jacobs (2005, 2008) describes hope as a mutual goal or shared future rather than a personal aspiration.
first time since the accident that I have had a true feeling of passion for something that I did and that something that I used to be able to do.

Candi went on to say:

I don’t think I have any goals. I just, you know.... was just thankful that I could get myself into a boat again. I think I was just hoping that I would enjoy it. I was hoping that I would have the opportunity to continue it.

Skill development. Other sailors explained that they wanted to develop their skills so that they could sail independently and take friends or family sailing or volunteer as a companion sailor. Jay said:

My goal was to sail by myself.... And I did it. At the end of the summer [I sailed] with my friends [who have never sailed] and to me that was my biggest accomplishment.... I’ve always been told that I can’t do certain things. At [the end of the] summer, sailing solo without any help was a feather in my cap.

Similarly, Krista explained one of her several goals:

The first year, my goal was to learn how to sail.... And I did.... At the very end of the summer I had the opportunity to go out on the water and take my dad and I was very proud that I was able to do okay.

Giving back to the community. Volunteer 1’s goal related to the QQDSP and its community. He wanted to “create an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation among the staff and management with one goal: to let the members enjoy the joy of sailing”. Other participants’ goals became community-oriented as they became increasingly involved within the program. For example, Ann initially just wanted to be able to sail;
however, when she joined the BOD, her goals focused on the DSAO’s mission\textsuperscript{29}.

Similarly, Nikko’s goal was to sail 12 to 15 hours a week so he could become a better sailor. Nikko’s volunteering enabled him to sail frequently, which reshaped his goals. He sought to learn different ways of communicating with non-verbal sailors in an effort to empower them:

\begin{quote}
I began to like volunteering with the people with communication challenges, because I now had something more meaningful to do than just sail. I had the challenge of learning how to communicate with that person who did not use traditional methods of speaking, sign language, written form, pointing to pictures etc…. This was a new goal I had with each person I sailed. As I learned how the person was able to communicate, I again changed goals. I then let the person know that they are the captain and I’m there to help us get to where they want to go….These are the ways my goals changed from merely wanting to sail certain amount of hours a week, to wanting to be the best companion sailor I could become for individuals who I had just discovered were perfectly capable of letting me know so much more about their wishes for sailing then anyone ever imagined.
\end{quote}

Natasha explained that her initial personal goals were “to make money” and “learn how to sail”. However, as she interacted with sailors and volunteers her goals changed:

\begin{quote}
My goals changed from just like going to work every day and having a summer job to having so much fun and just being a part of this community with these people…. And being there every day to provide any support that they needed….

My goals just changed to allow these people to experience this awesome feeling.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{29}Refer to page 2 for DSAO’s mission statement.
**Strengths**

Participants identified personal strengths that were relevant to the DSAO’s mission. Common strengths related to: 1) interpersonal skills, 2) a desire to share the passion for sailing, 3) commitment to the QQDSP, and 4) sailing experience. Perceived challenges encountered by participants provided opportunities to draw upon new and enhance existing personal strengths. The QQDSP provided opportunities for participants to have an active role in shaping and being shaped by the program. These opportunities provided participants with multiple pathways to use their strengths to achieve personal and/or community goals. Participants’ existing and enhanced strengths contributed to their overall personal experiences. Participants also shared their strengths in an effort to contribute to the experiences of others.

**Interpersonal skills.** Participants commonly identified their interpersonal skills as a strength. Participants used this strength to shape the sense of community within the QQDSP. Allan told me:

*My strengths [are] my social skills .... Socially, being able to socialize with a wide variety of diverse people.... An example would be talking to people like [a sailor] when he is frustrated that he can’t race.... Or talking to someone who has [personal issues] and has a hard time talking about it.... Things like that I am able to talk to people that have those types of problems.*

Similarly, Candi, said:

*Whenever I see the kids from the GOB program.... it is very easy for me to interact with them and laugh with them or whatever.... Same thing for any new person coming down, I think I am able to make them feel comfortable.*
Pinky, a staff member, cited her ability to connect with people as a strength that made her good at her job:

_I believe the empathy that I have for people and my interpersonal skills are my strengths.... So it is really easy for me to find something that we can relate to and I like making people feel good about themselves.... I was the front line person, so I tried my best to know people’s names at QQDSP.... It is important to make them feel like there is a purpose for coming here._

Volunteer 1 described his ability to foster a positive environment as a strength:

_I seem to have a nose for positive living and am able to create a positive environment for myself and the persons I am with.... You have to love yourself first before you can love somebody else. And you have to be lovable before you can expect anybody to love you.... When you are in a relationship, a club, a team, life is not about you, it is about us._

Sarai explained that her strengths are her patience and ability to work with and empower people:

_My strengths would be.... I don’t know.... I understand people and I am patient with that. And I understand that everybody has something to bring and how to make it all work.... I am really good at empowering others. I am really good at getting people feeling motivated and you know, seeing what their talent is and how to make that the forefront and make them see it._

Sarai went on to further explain her strengths as commodore:

_. . . . it is about taking criticisms and continuing to support and help people to become strong leaders.... I am able to interpret what is really going on [within a
situation] .... And making sure that I am bridging the gaps with staff. Like, for some it may be their first job. For others it may be their first job with [PWDs] .... And how to mesh everyone together and have everyone be comfortable.

Sharing the passion. The desire to share the passion for sailing was identified as another strength. When describing his strengths, Kevin said, “Well, bringing a lot more people to the program and getting them involved. I feel passionate about DSAO .... I wanna share that experience with other [PWDs]”. Kevin went on to share an example:

I wanted [a sailor’s] mom to go out and see her son sail. And she was completely freaked out .... I had to give her all types of reassurance that she was going to be okay and everything .... I took her sailing because I wanted her to share some of the passion and to be able to experience what her son is experiencing .... and that she would understand what he is feeling.

Commitment. Other sailors identified their strengths as relating to their commitment to the QQDSP and its participants. They indicated that it was important to them to honor their scheduled sailing times and volunteer obligations. Jay said:

My reliability is a personal strengths .... Because, you don’t want to let anybody down in the club. If I booked a sail, I knew it was important to be there because if I didn’t show up, the boat would be sitting there .... and somebody who really wanted to go sailing couldn’t .... You know, that is not fair .... You gotta be a team player.

Nikko explained:

I have a lot of determination. This helps because I won’t back down and not sail easily. I’ve sailed the day after a surgery, because I’ve made that [volunteer] commitment .... I’m not easily deterred by weather and I come prepared for it.
**Sailing Experience.** Sailing experience was also identified as a strength. Volunteer 2 believed that his knowledge of sailing and boats enabled him to problem solve while on the water. He also believed his sailing experience gave him something to talk about with sailors and other volunteers. His sailing experience ultimately contributed towards his goal of enhancing his interpersonal skills:

*My sailing experience definitely helped me understand any problem that we may come across on the water…. Having a basic understanding of how boats work …. So my knowledge has helped me interact with sailors and other volunteers and…. I think my sharing of interest was a big thing. So I think that definitely helped with conversation, because everyone was talking about the same thing.*

**Strengths enhanced through opportunities.** Participants recognized that overcoming perceived challenges within the QQDSP presented opportunities to develop new strengths or enhance existing strengths. Sailors explained that sailing independently increased their confidence. Krista considers her confidence a strength. However, she was not confident in her abilities to realize her goal of being a volunteer companion sailor. Volunteer 1 provided Krista with a positive experience when she initially learned to sail. Krista, acting as a volunteer, wanted to provide a similar experience to the sailors she would be working with. She explained:

*I certainly increased my confidence.….But getting to the point that I am actually taking someone out on to the lake who is completely dependent upon me for safety was a big scary thing.*

Krista went on to describe how she enhanced her confidence:

*The first time that I was supposed to go out and volunteer, my person that I was*
supposed to take out, didn’t show up. And the boat was available to me…. and I said you know what….I am going to take this boat out all by myself. And I have never ever been out all by myself…. So I went out and I just had the perfect sail. There was no pressure for me to perform for anybody else…. And it made me overcome my fear and think “you know what, I can do this, I can take someone out and give them a beautiful experience like I gave myself today”.

Staff members described scheduling and logistics challenges as opportunities to enhance their strengths. They enhanced their interpersonal skills by learning to be patient and to discuss any issues with participants. Staff members learned that participants were generally appreciative when they were kept informed of any issues that may interfere with their sailing time. Natasha, whose goal was to provide participants with a positive experience, explained:

I feel like the challenges that I encountered, a lot were logistics and workload sort of things. Like we had all these people here and we could only load them so fast. And with all those challenges I just needed to be patient. Connect with the people. Explain to them that we have to do this in a safe way. But because of all the practice of being patient and connecting with people, it did become easy to work with people who were waiting…. There were definitely days that were not great, but there were definitely sailors that came on to the dock and they were so happy…. And definitely any challenge wasn’t as important as the work we were doing I think.

Volunteer 2 explained that teaching sailors was sometimes a challenge. Volunteer 2 said that he developed teaching skills and enhanced his patience and problem solving skills by
learning new ways to communicate with participants:

    Teaching was a challenge. Prior to that I had really no experience. Learning how to get people to understand certain things, that was a big challenge. Like, how to get an idea across in such a way to absorb what I was saying and it’ll make sense to them ....So I definitely learned to be more patient and adapt how I would share my sailing knowledge.

    All the sailors interviewed expressed a desire to contribute to the program and its participants. Opportunities to share positive experiences and to have meaningful roles within the QKDSP were important for many sailors. Sailors were encouraged to join the BOD or to become volunteer companion sailors. Ann explained, “I love to go out as a companion and basically do what my first volunteer sailor did for me. And show them the basics and say, ‘you’re sailing!’ I just love that”. Krista also stated that she enjoyed being a volunteer sailing companion:

    My volunteer experience was the most awesome experience because I took [PWDs] more severe than mine sailing and got to give those people a positive experience to enhance their lives.... and that feeling of contributing and giving back to the community, just...it just made me feel like a million bucks.

    Krista went on to explain:

    We all love to do things for others. And sometimes that is really hard when you have a handicap. It is just so much effort to even look after yourself that doing something for someone else can be challenging sometimes. [Volunteering] just made me feel proud. It made me feel humble. Happy.
Sarai described her frustrations with sometimes being classified as a participant within other programs for PWDs. A resulting enhanced strengths was Sarai’s ability to empower participants within the QQDSP:

*I was grateful there were volunteer opportunities and I could have more of an instruction role rather than “I am always going to be a participant because I have a disability”. You know there was that opportunity for empowerment. The fact is [the QQDSP] encompass everyone into our volunteers .... I was able to do other things and be helpful and be an active member and not be like “I need a companion”. You get treated like a baby when you have a disability and it is totally aggravating. And you know, they were still able to provide me with something to do and put me to good use and in the end they put me on the board.*

**Resources**

Participants identified people, the sailboats and the assistive technology as the most readily available resources at the QQDSP. Two sailors described the subsidization of the QQDSP as a financial resource that kept participation costs low for the program. The low program cost subsequently made the QQDSP more accessible to PWDs with lower incomes. Access to resources enabled participants to use, sustain and enhance their strengths in addition to overcoming perceived challenges. Resources also facilitated participants’ experiences by supporting pathways to achieve personal and/or community goals.

**People as resources.** Participants described people as the greatest resources. Participants supported each other, helped enhance each other’s personal strengths in addition to shaping each other’s goals. Allan described improving his sailing skills by talking with
Other people: 

*Other people sharing their experiences and knowledge of sailing was the best resource I think. You learn a lot by just hanging out with a group of people than just reading a book.*

Allan went on to describe his observations and interactions with volunteers:

*The volunteers are like social workers in a way, you know. You’ve got a companion sailor, a volunteer you’re out there sailing for a few hours, talking with them, you’re gonna learn shit. So yeah, everybody brings something to the table and out there sailing as a companion and offering experiences that definitely helps people look at the world differently or their life differently.*

Pinky described Sarai as her main resource:

*The number one resource to me was Sarai. Not only was she in a managerial supervisor position to make sure that everything was running smoothly, but she herself has a disability and she knows where a lot of people are coming from. A lot of times I would find myself complaining about certain things.... but Sarai would always bring me back down to reality.*

Pinky said that sailors also acted as resources, not necessarily for her, but for other sailors. They would share information with her, because she was the office manager, so that she could share it with others. Pinky believed she enhanced her ability to connect with sailors by being able to share this information:

*The different members that you meet, they would always bring up different activities that they could share with other [PWDs] and I would refer them to that.... Even Kevin used to tell me about disabled scuba diving.... So just being able to*
Kevin explained how Volunteer 1 supported him to sail independently:

I appreciate [Volunteer 1] so much because he is such a dedicated volunteer.... I know what he did for me. I think the first time I had ever met [Volunteer 1] was the very first time that I sailed around the island. You know, I was a newbie to the program and everything, but being able to just navigate the Eastern Gap, he encouraged me to do it on my own.... we did it. And once we got out to the open bay and the lake and when the wind hit us. It was just beauty.

Jay described the emotional and social support that she received from participants when she was having a bad day:

Like if you are having a bad day it is just nice to see people you know and like to be around. Even if you are not sailing with a volunteer, it is still nice to get to know them or chat with them on the dock. And that just boosts your spirits right there. Just to see somebody that you haven’t seen for a while and just ask them how they are. Just getting a hug sometimes, you know.... Just the personal “God, it’s been awhile”, you know, like I said, it perks me up.

Nikko told me that he learned most from the non-verbal sailors he sailed with:

Each [sailor] has taught me new ways to communicate. Each time I sail with a new person, I’m reminded of trust in humanity. How essential this trust is for this person to come into a boat with a complete stranger and trust that I will bring them on a safe enjoyable journey.

Some participants described having anxiety regarding joining the QQDSP. However,
participants made them feel welcome and comfortable. Candi told me, “From the minute I walked into the program, when I saw Pinky sitting there, you know her smile and just the way she would greet people. You know, it made me feel secure. I knew I was in good hands”.

Participants who acquired spinal cord injuries expressed that they were initially hesitant to join the QQDSP because they feared being labeled as “disabled”. Support from participants who previously had similar reservations encouraged participants to get involved with the program. Krista explained:

*You know, it is a traumatic experience to have a spinal cord injury and it was really hard for me….I didn’t want to be identified as a disabled person. I wanted to continue with my able-bodied friends and my able-bodied life as best I could in a wheelchair…. I went to an orientation that was promoting participation for people with spinal cord injuries and Kevin was speaking…and he went up to the front and started talking about his experience and he actually said the exact words that I always thought…. that he didn’t want to be associated with those types of people. And it immediately resonated with me. I almost started crying because I thought that is exactly how I felt and here is this person up at the front talking about his sailing experience and I was just so moved by what he had to say and how positive his experience was. So I thought “yup, I am going to do this, I am going to sail”.*

**Equipment as resources.** Participants also referred to the assistive technology and sailboats as resources. Allan tore a tendon in his forearm in 2013. He was concerned it would affect his ability to sail independently. He said:

*Well a big challenge this year was learning to sail with my new right arm*
problem…. I overcame that by using the Windlass when I thought my body wasn’t physically capable of handling the wind…. I guess I overcame my challenges in a way by using technology that the sailing club had available for me.

Prior to being hired to work with the QQDSP, Natasha did not have any sailing experience. She realized her goal of learning to sail through her interactions with other participants and access to the sailboats:

You know, sometimes [Volunteer 1] didn’t have to stay, but he would and we would go sailing. And that was just like a volunteer who had time and the expertise and we had access to the boats. The boats were definitely a resource for us.

Conclusion

My results demonstrate that participants were shaping and were being shaped by each other. Although participants were initially unaware of the QQDSP’s existence, community support and access to resources supported participants’ pathways to develop new strengths and enhance existing strengths in addition to achieving personal and community goals. Ultimately, participants’ perceptions of abilities and disabilities were transformed.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Using a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) underpinned by the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984) I illustrate how participants are co-transformed within the QQDSP. In this chapter, I answer my research questions. I discuss the co-
transformation of participants and how the DSAO/QQDSP’s\textsuperscript{30} structures were shaped by and concurrently shaping participants. I conclude the chapter by outlining how my thesis supports, challenges and extends existing literature.

**Sub-Question 1**

*How does a Hope and Strengths Perspective explain participants’ experiences?*

I answer my first research question by examining participants’ experiences in relation to practices of hope (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Snyder, 2002). I then analyze participants’ experiences from a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996).

**Practices of Hope**

This section examines participants’ goals in relation to Snyder’s (2002) and Jacobs’ (2006, 2008) conceptualizations of hope. Participants’ goals commonly related to: (1) participation, (2) skill development, and/or (3) giving back to the community. Goals were shaped by participants’ experiences and through their interactions with others.

**Participation.** Sailors initially wanted to just “get on the water” and sail. Participation goals related to independence and feelings of freedom. Sailors described wanting to sail frequently because the sailing season is limited to three and a half months. Staff members and able-bodied volunteers did not describe any personal participation goals.

**Skill Development.** Most sailors’ goals transformed after their first sailing experience. Sailors’ goals thus became skill-oriented, whereas Volunteer 2’s goal was initially skill-oriented. Skill development was an important goal for many sailors so they could

\textsuperscript{30} The DSAO is the organization that governs the QQDSP. Within the QQDSP participants are transformed.
enhance their independence. This was especially true for volunteer companion sailors. They wanted to ensure that they could share their positive experiences with the hope that the sailors with whom they sailed continue with the QQDSP. Volunteer 2 considered his skill development important for him to effectively instruct new sailors. Although some participants described challenges associated with sailing or working independently, participants were able to find alternative pathways to realize their goals using the QQDSP’s available resources. This ability to find alternative pathways to circumvent challenges aligns with Snyder’s (2002) description of a high-hope individual. For example, after Allan’s tendon injury, he sought the QQDSP’s assistive technology to continue independently sailing. When participants encountered challenges, they chose not to discontinue their involvement with the QQDSP after reflecting upon and being motivated by their overall positive experiences.

**Giving back to the community.** Some participants’ goals became community-oriented once they realized skill-oriented goals. Participants valued the strengths gained through their experiences and accordingly altered their goals in an effort to extend their positive experiences to others. Some sailors wanted to become volunteer companions, sail with family or friends or join the BOD. Other participants’ (e.g., Sarai, Volunteer 1 and Pinky) goals were consistently community-oriented. This is due to their previous experiences with PWDs. For Natasha, her initial goals changed from “making money” and “learning to sail”, to wanting to ensure participants have positive experiences. Her goals were transformed through her interactions with participants on the dock.

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31 e.g., freedom and independence and a sense of community.
Participants embodied Jacobs’ (2006, 2008) conceptualization of hope by reflecting on the meaning of their experiences and acting to share those experiences with others. Participants’ goals transformed from a “hope for” something to “hope in” a shared future. Not only were participants’ goals shaped by their interactions with others, the pathways to achieving their goals were also supported by others within the QQDSP’s hope-enhancing environment (which will be discussed in a later section). For example, while working with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO), Kevin shared his personal experiences related to sailing and living with a disability, which inspired Krista to join the QQDSP. Volunteer 1 supported Krista’s pathways to realize her goal to sail independently. After she learned to sail, Krista’s goals were reshaped through her interactions with other participants. Krista’s reshaped goal was to volunteer so she could pay forward the positive experiences that Volunteer 1 facilitated for her. Narratives from participants like Krista support Paraschak’s (2013a) argument that “each time we opt to frame our actions in hope we potentially cultivate hope in others” (p. 238). Participants’ actions and community-oriented goals support that hope is “wrapped up in the web of social relations” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 785).

**Strengths Perspective**

In this section I discuss the Strengths Perspective principles (Saleebey, 2009) that are apparent in my results: (1) each individual or group has strengths, (2) that his/her peak growth capacity is unknown (3) “experts” help by working with individuals, rather than on them, 4) all relationships must be caring and value the context, (5) challenges provide opportunities to develop strengths, and (6) resources are available in every environment (Saleebey, 2009, p. 15-18). These principles are foundational to the
conceptualization of my thesis because each participant identified existing strengths, explained how their existing strengths were enhanced and described how and why they shared their strengths with others. For the purposes of my analysis, I combine “each individual or group has strengths” and “an individual’s peak growth capacity is unknown” because of their interrelatedness. I also combine “experts help by working with individuals, rather than on them” and “all relationships must be caring and value the context” because my results highlight that perceived “experts” worked with all individuals due to their abilities to value the context of their experiences, to care about their relationships and to share their strengths.

**Each individual or group has strengths and his/her peak growth capacity is unknown.** Participants initially had difficulty identifying strengths during the interview. Although participants have previously reflected on their sailing experiences, they had not considered what are their personal strengths or how their personal strengths contributed to their experiences and to the experiences of others. All participants identified personal strengths that were relevant to the DSAO’s mission after responding to probing questions from the interview guide (see Appendix G). Their responses contribute to Saleebey’s (2008) argument that strengths are contextual. Participants’ strengths were related to sailing or to the community. Several participants indirectly identified personal strengths when asked questions that related to goals, co-transformation or group-based beliefs. For example, Nikko described his strengths as his commitment to the QQDSP. However, it was apparent in Nikko’s description of his goals, that his strengths were also his empathy and ability to actively listen\(^{32}\) to non-verbal sailors.

\[32\] Refer to page 60 for Nikko’s quote. Nikko listened to non-verbal communication through alternative methods of communication.
My results demonstrate how participants’ strengths evolved. Participants were able to enhance their strengths through challenges (which will later be discussed) and interactions with others. Some sailors were initially hesitant to join the QQDSP, while others were not confident in their capacity to learn to sail. However, sailors did learn to sail and eventually volunteered as sailing companions and/or joined the BOD. Their experiences emphasize that each individual does have inherent strengths and their capacity for personal growth is not limited (Saleebey, 2009).

Participants commonly identified strengths related to: (1) interpersonal skills, (2) a desire to share the passion for sailing, (3) commitment to the QQDSP, and (4) sailing experience. Participants’ strengths align with Saleebey’s (2008) classification of strengths, which are: personal qualities and virtues, talent, knowledge, personal stories, and the community (p. 136-137).

Caring individuals work with individuals and value context. Participants used their interpersonal skills to share the QQDSP’s sense of community with others. They valued their relationships, regardless if they were sailors, volunteers or staff members. The majority of sailors also valued their independence on the water, because they sometimes perceived their lives as being regulated by health-service professionals. Therefore relationships that valued the context of sailing with disabilities were crucial in supporting and enhancing participants’ independence. Although staff members and volunteers may be perceived to be in a position of power, relationships between themselves and sailors were horizontal. They described their roles as supportive. Staff members and volunteers worked with participants to facilitate independence and feelings of freedom that ultimately shaped participants’ positive experiences. Staff members and volunteers
actively listened to other participants in an effort to learn about their skills, needs and personal stories. Nikko communicated with and listened to non-verbal sailors\(^{33}\) by asking questions, then requesting that non-verbal sailors tap their foot or move their finger if they agreed with his suggestion. Nikko wanted to empower non-verbal sailors to make their own decisions, rather than sailing wherever he wished. Similarly, Sarai described her strengths as her ability to empower participants (specifically staff members and volunteers) by listening, “seeing what their talent is” and then helping them to use their “talent”. Pinky and Natasha emphasized their empathy. They explained they understood the QQDSP’s positive impact on participants’ lives and therefore cared about ensuring that participants continued to have positive experiences.

Participants’ experiences were connected through their various relationships within the QQDSP. Most participants referred to Volunteer 1 as an individual who positively shaped them. Volunteer 1 described his strengths as his ability to foster a positive environment. He further explained, “When you are in a relationship, a club, a team, life is not about you, it is about us”. His statement illustrates his capacity to care for others, which ultimately impacted his relationships within the QQDSP. Kevin’s actions also transformed participants. Kevin’s positive sailing experiences empowered him to use his strengths to contribute to the QQDSP’s sense of community. Kevin is aware of the challenges associated with living with a disability in addition to opportunities that can provide support (e.g., the QQDSP). As previously mentioned, he influenced Krista to join the QQDSP, who eventually used her strengths to volunteer as a sailing companion.

\(^{33}\) Nikko frequently sailed with sailors that some would perceive as being “low-functioning”. Their mobility was severely limited and they had very limited or no ability to speak.
Other sailors’ strengths were rooted in their commitment to scheduled sailing times and volunteer obligations. Their reliability and dedication are community-driven strengths. Jay attributed her reliability to not wanting to “let anybody down in the club”. She considered herself a part of a team. Nikko explained his dedication to volunteering. He described always meeting his volunteer obligations because he respected that commitment. Nikko also cared about participants’ comfort and well-being. He explained that on rainy days he brought extra rain gear for sailors so they did not get wet.

Participants’ actions demonstrated that they valued the QQDSP and cared about supporting others. Participants’ descriptions of shared experiences within the QQDSP contribute to Saleebey’s (2011) argument that strengths-based practitioners must be aware of the participant’s world-relationships, culture, traditions and opportunities that may offer support. Furthermore, participants’ descriptions of their strengths (e.g., interpersonal skills, desire to share the passion and commitment to the QQDSP) align with Laursen’s (2002) components of caring relationships: trust, empathy, availability, affirmation and respect.

**Challenges provide opportunities to develop strengths.** Participants developed new strengths and/or enhanced existing strengths by overcoming perceived challenges. Confidence was a common strength that was developed and/or enhanced. Sailing is inherently high-risk, taking place in a sometimes-unstable environment. Some sailors feared negative on-the-water experiences because they doubted their abilities to sail independently or to volunteer as a sailing companion. Personal strengths that related to resilience were used to overcome on-the-water and off-the-water challenges. Support from other participants also helped sailors cope with anxieties. When sailors overcame
sailing-related challenges they gained a sense of pride that contributed to their sense of freedom and independence (i.e., a personal resource) (Ponic, 1995). Consequently, sailors used their confidence (a new or enhanced strength) to actively seek challenges to enhance further strengths. For example, sailors learned to race, became companion sailors, or joined the BOD. Some sailors explained that sailing gave them the confidence to participate in other outdoor recreation activities (e.g., scuba diving, hang gliding or kayaking). Sailors’ pursuit of challenges supports Anderson et al. (1997) findings that PWDs do actively seek adventure and risk in outdoor recreation.

Some volunteers were anxious about their role on the BOD and their abilities to maintain the DSAO’s mission or to accomplish community-oriented goals (e.g., the DSAO fundraiser). Sarai overcame her BOD-related challenges by reflecting on her existing strengths that she used within her job outside of the DSAO. She subsequently applied her work-related skills to the DSAO/QQDSP. Sarai described her strengths as symbiotic: she was able to enhance and transfer her strengths between her job and the DSAO/QQDSP. Sarai further explained that her “love” for the DSAO/QQDSP motivated her to learn new skills to cope with challenges. Sarai’s “love” for the DSAO/QQDSP aligns with caring relationships that value context (Saleebey, 2011).

Staff members were also anxious about their abilities to perform their jobs effectively. For example, Natasha was apprehensive about delays in unloading and loading participants, whereas Pinky was concerned about being able to recruit volunteer companion sailors for sail bookings. Both Natasha and Pinky overcame their challenges by using their interpersonal skills to communicate with participants in addition to reaching out for support when they needed it.
The development of new strengths and enhancements of existing strengths through overcoming challenges are consistent with Crosbie’s (2014) findings of an outdoor education program for PWDs. However, Crosbie (2014) does not use a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996). Instead he examines the benefits and challenges of outdoor recreation for PWDs.

**Resources are available in every environment.** Participants identified accessible resources within the QQDSP. People, the sailboats and the assistive technology were considered the main resources; however, two sailors also identified the subsidization of the QQDSP’s program costs as a financial resource. The low program costs made the QQDSP more accessible to PWDs with lower incomes. The combination of accessible human and material resources enabled participants to use, sustain and enhance their strengths in addition to overcoming perceived challenges.

People were considered the greatest resource; participants were co-transformed by supporting and enhancing each other’s strengths. Participants helped to develop and shape human resources by recruiting friends, family or colleagues. For example, Jay recruited a friend so that she could sail with her. Jay’s friend eventually joined the BOD and used her strengths to contribute to the QQDSP. Other participants, like Volunteer 2, used their sailing experience to teach other participants how to sail. Volunteer 2’s teaching abilities were shaped and enhanced by working with various sailors and volunteers.

Material resources such as the sailboats and assistive technology supported the participants in using/enhancing their strengths. Moreover, it supported pathways for sailors to enhance their independence on the water. Similarly, access to boats enabled
Volunteer 2 to learn how to operate a motorboat, whereas Natasha learned to sail.

Natasha was able to combine her existing strengths (e.g., interpersonal skills) with her newly developed strengths (e.g. ability to sail) to sail with sailors if a volunteer companion was not available. In doing so Natasha enhanced her abilities to support participants as a human resource.

After I learned how to sail I was able to go with people that maybe had a little bit of sailing experience but were not 100% comfortable going out on their own. ....At the end of September one of the volunteers texted me and said they couldn’t make their sail. So I went out with [a sailor] and it was like the coolest thing because I went from the beginning of the summer not knowing how to sail, not knowing how to interact with [PWDs], to being able to take anyone sailing.

Contributions of Hope to a Strengths Perspective

My findings highlight that practices of hope (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Snyder, 2002, Paraschak, 2013a) are appropriately embedded into a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996). Participants used personal strengths and drew upon the strengths of others to follow pathways to achieve goals. The process of realizing goals subsequently enhanced participants’ strengths. The transformation of participants was not unidirectional, wherein staff members and volunteers merely provided a service to enhance the quality of life for PWDs. All participants, including staff members and volunteers were co-transformed by being available to each other. Complimentary power relations (Paraschak, 2013a) facilitated co-transformation through hope and strengths-based practices within the QQDSP. This was evident by staff members’ and volunteers’ abilities to work with sailors, not on them. Participants had a mutual vision towards a shared future within a
hope-enhancing environment (Paraschak, 2013a). Participants’ awareness of the meanings of their experiences and experiences of others fostered community-oriented goals that shaped how they shared their strengths.

**Sub-Question 2**

*How does the DSAO/QQDSP facilitate Hope and Strengths-based practices?*

I answer my second research question using the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984) to examine the DSAO/QQDSP and participants’ experiences in relation to Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering community organizations: (1) group-based belief systems, (2) opportunity role structures, (3) support systems, and (4) leadership.

**Group-based Belief Systems**

Participants identified several common beliefs shared within the DSAO/QQDSP: (1) the belief in oneself, (2) valuing the experience and (3) teamwork. The shared beliefs supported DSAO’s mission. The group-based beliefs related to participants’ overall experiences and goals and contributed to their understanding of the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992).

**The belief in oneself.** Participants described the belief in oneself as being shared within the QQDSP. This shared belief aligns with part of the DSAO’s mission to “To build confidence and self-esteem for [PWDs], and enhance their independence” (DSAO, 2014). As previously mentioned, participants’ confidence was supported and enhanced through

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34 Although participants’ shared beliefs supported the DSAO’s overall mission, they did not mention the mission’s fourth objective “To facilitate the integration of disabled and able-bodied recreation and competition”.

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personal resilience, interactions with others and by overcoming challenges. Although the belief in oneself may be perceived as individualistic, participants’ increased confidence supported a belief in their ability to sustain effort on the pathway to their personal goals, in addition to enabling them to share strengths and transform goals towards the QQDSP’s community. This aligns with Snyder’s (2002) Hope Theory.

**Valuing the experience.** The belief in oneself and in one’s abilities to overcome challenges contributed to the value of participants’ experiences. Participants recognized how their involvement with the QQDSP enabled them to develop new strengths and enhance existing strengths. Participants also recognized the value of other participants’ experiences. Participants were thus shaped by interactions within their experiences while shaping other participants’ experiences through interactions. For example, staff members and volunteers understood how sailors enjoyed the independence and feelings of freedom. Similarly, Sarai acknowledged the QQDSP’s positive impact on able-bodied staff members’ perceptions of PWDs’ abilities.

**Teamwork.** Participants’ appreciation of the value of the experience contributed to their descriptions of belonging to a “team”. Participants believed that all participants helped each other and contributed to the QQDSP’s sense of community. Affiliations with the QQDSP enabled participants to share common experiences, goals and identities as sailors. Furthermore, the caring relationships that valued context facilitated participants’ abilities to share strengths within the “team”.

My analysis of participants’ group-based beliefs highlight how the DSAO’s mission, a formal “rule”, (Giddens, 1984) shaped participants’ actions and behaviors. Participants’ actions and behaviors were rooted in hope and strengths-based practices,
which subsequently shaped other participants. My findings align with Maton and Salem’s (1995) findings that empowering organizations “look beyond themselves” and encourage their members to adopt a “universal outlook” that guides members towards achieving organizational goals.

**Opportunity Role Structures**

Group-based beliefs shaped opportunity role structures. Staff members\(^{35}\) and veteran volunteers\(^{36}\) actively encouraged all participants to pursue opportunity roles within the DSAO/QQDSP. Sailors and able-bodied volunteers benefited most from opportunity roles. Opportunity roles reshaped their internal rules\(^{37}\) and enhanced awareness of their personal resources (Ponic, 1995). Sailors explained that opportunities to contribute back to the QQDSP enhanced the value of their personal experiences. For example, Krista described why her volunteer experience was meaningful:

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I \text{ think it is so fantastic because a lot of times as someone who is disabled, you tend to be a lot on the receiving end. So the fact that you are both receiving benefit and giving benefit really is such an empowering thing to one’s person.}
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Different roles were accessible with varying degrees of responsibility. For example, the DSAO/QQDSP enabled sailors to become volunteer companions and/or to join the BOD. Able-bodied volunteers can also become BOD members. BOD members shaped the formal structures (e.g., rules and resources) of the DSAO/QQDSP. Roles within the BOD also varied. BOD members have opportunities to develop policies, maintain meeting

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\(^{35}\) Staff members are formal representatives of the DSAO/QQDSP.

\(^{36}\) I define veteran volunteers as individuals who have volunteered with the QQDSP for more than three years or individuals who have a formal role on the BOD.

\(^{37}\) Internal rules are based on a person’s assumptions and ideologies that construct the perception of his/her social life (Ponic, 1995).
minutes, hire staff members, be commodore or be members-at-large to promote the DSAO to the community (e.g., representing the DSAO/QQDSP at the Toronto Boat Show).

Opportunity roles transformed sailors’ and volunteers’ goals towards the DSAO’s mission. Sailors’ and volunteers’ existing strengths became resources that the QQDSP could draw upon to support pathways to achieving community-oriented goals. Opportunity roles also enabled sailors and volunteers to develop new strengths and to enhance existing strengths. For example, Ann enhanced her existing fundraising skills by organizing the DSAO’s “Night of Arts and Culture”38. As a result, Ann was able to add her enhanced skills and accomplishment to her resume.

The QQDSP’s opportunity roles align with Rappaport’s (1981) description of recipient and provider roles. Recipient roles enhanced volunteer companion sailors’ and BOD members’ skills (i.e., strengths). Provider roles enhanced volunteer companion sailors’ and BOD members’ self-efficacy to use their new or enhance skills to help others within and outside the QQDSP (i.e., personal resource). The QQDSP’s opportunity roles align with Maton and Salem’s (1995) findings in relation to the religious fellowship, the mutual help organization for persons with severe mental illness, and the educational program for African American students.

**Support Systems**

The QQDSP’s community provided accessible human resources that facilitated social and emotional peer-support for participants. Participants’ strengths contributed to the QQDSP’s support systems. They made themselves available to each other and

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38 Night of Arts and Culture was a fundraising event for the DSAO. Local musicians performed and attendees had the opportunity to participate in a silent auction.
fostered caring relationships (i.e., principle of a Strengths Perspective). Allan described volunteers as social workers who provided life-learning experiences. Jay and Natasha explained that when they were having a bad day, talking with other participants made them feel better. Some participants described feeling socially isolated prior to joining the QQDSP; other participants had existing social networks. The QQDSP supported participants to develop new and/or to enhance existing social networks through events such as BBQs, Sailing Around the Island and Race Nights.

Participants with a longer history within the QQDSP acted as role models and actively sought to champion the QQDSP’s group-based beliefs. For example, Kevin, a long time QQDSP sailor, used his strengths to share his experiences with people with spinal cord injuries through his work with SCIO. Similarly, Sarai as the commodore shared her strengths to empower staff members and volunteers. This supports Manton and Salem’s (1995) findings that formal organizational structures provide those members with a longer organizational history the opportunity to act as role models and to foster hope within new members. Participants’ actions were shaped by informal rules based on their perceptions of the DSAO’s mission.

The QQDSP facilitated opportunities for peer-support through its physical environment. The QQDSP’s small physical structures supported socialization between participants. The office space enabled participants to interact with each other while they paid for their sail booking. It also provided a space for prospective sailors and volunteers to meet current participants. Pinky\textsuperscript{39} and veteran sailors and volunteers facilitated introductions. The dock enabled participants to socialize as they waited to be loaded into

\textsuperscript{39} Pinky is the office manager.
or unloaded out of the sailboats. This additionally provided opportunities for volunteers to get to know sailors or vice-versa. Participants’ one-to-one interactions within the sailboats were described as the most intimate. The sailboats enabled participants to share personal stories and a common experience that enhanced their relationships.

**Leadership**

Sailors often referred to peer-support when describing leadership. However, staff members and volunteers specifically mentioned Sarai. Sarai described her strengths as her abilities to empower others. She explained that it was important to her to ensure that everyone “meshed together” and to ensure that staff members were comfortable in their role of supporting participants. The commodore is a volunteer position that encompasses a lot of responsibilities. In addition to being commodore, Sarai has a full-time job outside of the DSAO/QQDSP. She explained:

*Being commodore for DSAO is a lot of work and I didn’t know how I was going to juggle everything and how I was going to do it right. It is one thing to get things done, it is another to do it in a way that is positive. I think I overcame that challenge by empowering others. That is a big one. Finding people to do jobs as well. And “how do I get the board to be active” and just keep everyone focused on the mission.*

Staff members’ and volunteers’ confirmation of Sarai’s description of her leadership supports Maton and Salem’s (1995) findings that empowering community organization leaders are able to empower members directly or indirectly through small group leaders.
(e.g., staff members and volunteers) who have regular contact with other organizational members.

**Organizational Culture**

The DSAO/QQDSP’s organizational structure\(^{40}\) contributed to the psychological empowerment\(^{41}\) of participants by providing access to human and material resources. The DSAO’s mission (e.g., a formal rule) governed participants’ behaviors and actions, which ultimately reshaped their internal rules about how they perceived their social boundaries. Individuals’ practical consciousness may hinder their awareness that other possibilities exist outside their social boundaries. As such, they may be more likely to reproduce dominant values and perceptions of how they are currently situated within social boundaries (Paraschak, 1997). The QQDSP provided a physical environment where participants’ practical consciousness was challenged and transformed through their interactions with structures (e.g., rules and resources). For example, some participants were initially unaware that opportunities existed for PWDs to sail. Furthermore, other participants indicated that they previously did not participate in activities that used the term “disabled” due to the perceived stigma.

The transformation of participants’ practical consciousness in relation to abilities (i.e., strengths) and disabilities aligns with the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). Participants recognized their abilities and the abilities of others. They did not perceive disabilities as a limitation. Participants positively grew in their power to use their strengths to realize goals. The increase of participants’ power within the DSAO/QQDSP

\(^{40}\) i.e., Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering community organizations.

\(^{41}\) Maton and Salem (1995) define psychological empowerment as, “the active, participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one's life and accomplish important life goals” (p. 632).
aligns with Cattaneo et al. (2014) description of empowerment. My results reveal that participants’ power shifted through opportunity role structures and support systems. Moreover, empowering goals were relevant to the QQDSP’s community. Participants’ realization of goals ultimately enhanced their strengths, which they were able to share within the QQDSP. For example, sailors’ goals to be volunteer companions enabled them to extend their positive experiences to others.

As previously mentioned, complimentary power relations facilitated hope and strengths-based practices within the QQDSP. The DSAO/QQDSP facilitated complimentary power relations by providing participants with opportunity role structures. Sailors and volunteers who are also BOD members were cognizant of their decisions’ potential positive or negative impacts on participants’ experiences. Therefore, they framed their actions (e.g., shaping rules and allocating resources) to maximize participants’ experiences based on the awareness of their personal experiences and the experiences of others.

The DSAO/QQDSP’s organizational structure supported a hope-enhancing environment (Paraschak, 2013a). A “disability culture” (Dupre, 2012) was not apparent within the QQDSP. The hope-enhancing environment (Paraschak, 2013a) fostered a culture based on sharing strengths, overcoming challenges and celebrating experiences.

Connections to the Literature

My findings of participants’ experiences and the organizational structures that facilitate those experiences support, extend, and challenge current literature.

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42 Disability culture encompasses a shared experience of oppression and celebrates individual’s differences (Dupre, 2012).
Support. Sailors’ descriptions of freedom and independence are common findings in outdoor recreation studies for PWDs (e.g., Crosbie, 2014; Divine & Dawson, 2010). Sailing differs from other recreation activities for PWD, as there are very limited structural barriers on the water. Participants often referred to the feeling of freedom when sailing further out on the open lake. Furthermore, participants described enjoying being outdoors. These findings support Korpela et al. (2010) study that outdoor recreation activities that enable participants to escape urban environments enhance emotional well-being. Unlike adaptive kayaking or canoeing, sailing requires very little muscular strengths. The assistive technology allows individuals with very limited mobility to sail autonomously.

The QQDSP’s sense of community fostered by common experiences, whether it be sailing or living with disabilities, supports previous research that outdoor recreation provides PWDs with further opportunities to socialize (e.g., Freudenberg & Arlinghaus, 2009; McAvoy, 2001). Similarly, Murray (2002) emphasized the importance of leisure activities in providing PWDs with opportunities to develop interests and to interact with others with similar interests.

Extends. My study extends Paraschak’s (2013a) research of hope and strengths-based practices by providing qualitative results based on the narratives of the QQDSP’s participants. Paraschak (2013a) argues that in order to create complimentary power relations, the people who shape rules and allocate resources must reflect on and be aware of the potential impacts of their actions. In doing so, a person in a position of power must incorporate “his/her personal aspirations, but also the consequence of particular choices

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43 The QQDSP operated on Lake Ontario, one of the Great Lakes.
on various individuals within a ‘broader community of relevance’, with whom a shared vision has been generated” (Paraschak, 2013a, p. 233). My findings highlight how opportunity role structures within the DSAO/QQDSP facilitated complimentary power relations by recognizing participants’ strengths and empowering them to use their strengths within the BOD. Consequently, being sailors and/or volunteer companions enabled BOD members to frame their actions with the hope of maximizing participants’ positive experiences.

The analysis of the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures supported Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering community organizations, however my study extends Maton and Salem’s (1995) study by incorporating a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a). My analysis reveals that participants’ goals and strengths were shaped and reshaped by their interactions with the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures. Concomitantly, participants’ goals and strengths contributed back to the DSAO/QQDSP’s community. The actions of shaping and being shaped ultimately enhanced the DSAO/QQDSP organizational culture of sharing. My study emphasized the importance of co-transformation within empowering community organizations. Without the possibility of co-transformation it is likely that hegemonic relationships would be maintained and PWDs would be marginalized by a top-down approach to sport management (i.e., participants are “worked on” by “experts”).

The possibilities of co-transformation extend the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). The Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992) implies that the physical and social environment must transform to facilitate PWDs’ full participation in society. Participants with disabilities are able to sail because the DSAO/QQDSP facilitates a
community and provides an accessible facility and sailboats. My study highlights the importance of opportunity role structures in empowering participants to facilitate transformation within the DSAO/QQDSP’s physical and social environment. The QQDSP provides a highly visible physical environment\(^4\) for participants to challenge onlookers’ practical consciousness. Moreover, opportunities exist for participants to develop new strengths and to enhance existing strengths by interacting with the DSAO/QQDSP’s structure (e.g., rules and resources). Participants are shaping and being shaped by the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures in relation to the Social Model of disability (Oliver, 1992).

My study also extends Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) *Flourishing through Leisure Model*, a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation by incorporating practices of hope and identifying the processes involved in participants’ co-transformation. Carruthers and Hood (2007) imply that all individuals involved in a strengths-based approach to therapeutic recreation have the opportunity to shape and to be shaped by the accompanying processes. However, they do not elaborate on these processes. The QQDSP’s opportunity role structures supported processes (i.e., pathways) for sailors to realize their goals to sail as volunteer companions and to share their strengths to shape other participants’ experiences. “Hope in” a shared future plays a significant role in enhancing participants’ strengths and transforming all individuals in a strengths-based program.

Lastly, my study contributes to the understanding of the relationships between a recreation program’s specific processes and measurable outcomes (e.g., the “black box”)

\(^4\) The QQDSP is located within downtown Toronto’s Harbourfront, an area popular with both locals and tourists.
Participants’ overall experiences (e.g., outcomes) were supported and enhanced by the DSAO/QQDSP’s hope and strengths-based practices (e.g., processes). The DSAO/QQDSP’s culture based on sharing strengths, overcoming challenges and celebrating experiences allowed participants to feel a sense of community. The hope and strengths-based practices were effective because staff members and volunteers worked with participants, not on them and were open to possibilities of transformation.

**Challenges.** My study challenges Carruthers and Hood’s (2007) and Anderson & Heyne’s (2012) strengths-based delivery and evaluation models. The QQDSP’s sailors valued being in control while on the water, because they sometimes felt that health-service professionals were regulating their lives. A formal strengths-based therapeutic recreation model may reduce participants’ perceptions of their independence and feelings of freedom within the QQDSP. My findings highlight that participants were able to develop new strengths and enhance existing strengths without following a strengths-based therapeutic recreation model facilitated by a health-service professional. The DSAO/QQDSP is an organization governed mostly by PWDs that includes people of all abilities. Although my interview process assisted participants in identifying their strengths, participants’ experiences and informal interactions within the QQDSP were the primary catalyst for the development and enhancement of strengths. Saleebey (2011) argues that a well-staged strengths-based model with specific outcomes may be ineffective because relationship processes are unique.

My study also challenges Dupre’s (2012) and Longmore’s (1995) descriptions of disability culture. Although the DSAO/QQDSP has the term “disabled” embedded its
name, the DSAO/QQDSP’s organizational culture celebrated all participants’ abilities, including able-bodied staff members and volunteers. Participants focus on what they and others can do, rather than what they and others cannot do.

Lastly, my study challenges Mayer’s and Anderson’s (2014) research of inclusive versus segregated recreation programs for PWDs. Mayer and Anderson (2014) argue that segregated recreation programs isolate PWDs from interacting with able-bodied people. They conclude that inclusive recreation programs should incorporate more skill-building for PWDs and reduce emphasis on competition. In doing so, they believe inclusive recreation programs will increase socialization between able-bodied people and PWDs. The QQDSP may be perceived as a segregated recreation program because of its modified equipment and sailboats. However the QQDSP includes participants of all abilities (both able-bodied people and PWDs). All participants use the same sailboat and are thus equal on the water. Opportunities for PWDs to socialize with able-bodied people do exist within the QQDSP, a perceived segregated recreation program. My findings challenge Mayer’s and Anderson’s (2014) study by highlighting the co-transformation of able-bodied participants and PWDs and the provision of opportunities for skill development by all involved (i.e., opportunities to enhance strengths).

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I provide an overview of my results and conclusions and provide theoretical and practical recommendations.
Summary

In this study I explored how participants within an adaptive sailing program are co-transformed through their interactions with each other and the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures. I used a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) underpinned by the Duality of Structure (Giddens, 1984) to examine participants’ experiences and to analyze how the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures facilitated those experiences. I focused on the QQDSP, the largest chapter operated by the DSAO.

I interviewed two staff members, four volunteers and six sailors to triangulate their respective perspectives. I used photograph elicitation to help participants reflect on their experiences and to prompt more profound thinking. Using Nvivo, I coded and analyzed data to address my two sub-questions.

I was able to answer both my research questions. In relation to my first research question, my results demonstrated that participants were shaping and being shaped by each other. Within the QQDSP participants were able to develop new strengths and enhance existing strengths through community support and access to resources. Access to resources supported participants’ pathways to realizing personal and community goals, which then contributed to participants’ overall experiences (i.e., freedom and independence and a sense of community). Participants’ goals ultimately embodied “hope in” a shared future (Jacobs, 2005, 2008).

In relation to my second research question, my results indicate that the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures (i.e., rules and resources) shaped participants’ behaviours.

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45 I define participants as all individuals involved with the DSAO/QQDSP, including staff members, volunteers and sailors.
46 SQ1: How does a Hope and Strengths perspective explain participants’ experiences within the QQDSP?
47 SQ2: How does the DSAO/QQDSP facilitate Hope and Strengths-based practices?
just as participants (as BOD members) shaped the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures. Participants’ interactions with the DSAO/QQDSP’s structures challenged and transformed their practical consciousness in relation to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). Participants emphasized their abilities (i.e., strengths) and the abilities of others, rather than focusing on disabilities and barriers. The DSAO/QQDSP used hope and strengths-based practices (Paraschak, 2013a) to empower participants through group-based belief systems, opportunity role structures, support systems (i.e., emotional and social support) and leadership (Maton & Salem, 1995). The DSAO/QQDSP’s hope and strengths-based practices contributed to a hope-enhancing environment (Paraschak, 2013a) based on an organizational culture of caring and sharing. This caring and sharing culture facilitated the co-transformation of all participants.

**Recommendations**

In this section I provide theoretical recommendations for future research in addition to practical recommendations for enhancing participants’ experiences within adaptive sailing programs.

**Theoretical recommendations.** I would like to increase my study’s sample size to explore if similar themes or new themes emerge within other adaptive sailing programs. I could enhance my study by interviewing participants from the BAS or the DSA’s various programs and then comparing their results with the QQDSP’s participants’ perspectives. I could also include participants with developmental disabilities, their personal support workers and participants’ family members. Interviewing the aforementioned participants would allow me to explore multiple perspectives of

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48 Burlington Able Sail is a chapter of the DSAO.
49 Disabled Sailing Association of British Columbia has multiple chapters.
individuals who are directly and indirectly\textsuperscript{50} involved with adaptive sailing programs. An analysis of personal support workers’ and participants’ family members’ perspectives would also enable me to investigate the extent of an adaptive sailing program’s transformative power because these individuals interact with participants outside the program’s structures.

I recommend the use of photograph elicitation for future outdoor recreation studies. Participants’ reflections of their photographs did prompt more profound responses. However, I believe the photograph elicitation was only effective because sailing is a scenic outdoor recreation activity in a natural environment. Participants valued the uniqueness of their experiences. They often described the feelings of the wind and the sounds of the water when referring to independence and freedom. Furthermore, I do not recommend providing participants with an existing album and then asking them to choose a photograph from that album. Photographs from the album did not represent participants’ experiences. When participants did not have a copy of a photograph readily available, they chose to describe a photograph or a scene that best represented their experience instead. This process of reflection still elicited profound responses.

Researchers also need to be aware of consent issues when using photograph elicitation. Although participants provided consent for me to use their photographs in my study, I did not have consent from the people/participants who appeared in participants’ photographs but were not a part of my study. Future research should also further examine the effectiveness of photograph elicitation.

\textsuperscript{50} Personal support workers attended the QQDSP with participants with developmental disabilities, however they did not sail.
Next, I recommend continuing to incorporate practices of hope (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Snyder 2002) into a Strengths Perspective (Saleebey, 1996) for future studies that examine marginalized groups. My study highlights how participants’ strengths and the strengths of others are inherently linked to overcoming challenges and supporting pathways to realizing goals. A Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) allow participants and researchers to have a larger view of how people’s interactions are connected to “hope in” a shared future.

Additionally, I recommend using a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) to explore how a sense of community is developed and supported within different underrepresented populations.

I also recommend integrating a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) into Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering community organizations. The two frameworks are interrelated with overlapping concepts and were effective in identifying hope and strengths-based practices facilitated by the DSAO/QQDSP.

Furthermore, I recommend that future researchers perform a comparative analysis of an inclusive recreation program and a segregated\(^{51}\) recreation program for PWDs using a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) and Maton and Salem’s (1995) characteristics of empowering community organizations. It would be interesting to explore whether or not the hope and strengths-based practices (if any) and the organization cultures differed between the organizations.

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\(^{51}\) A program that is specifically designed or labeled for PWDs.
Lastly, I recommend that future researchers use a Hope and Strengths Perspective (Paraschak, 2013a) to explore “hope in” the past. Saleebey (1996) argues that personal stories and narratives are significant sources of strengths for marginalized groups. In my results, participants reflected on the various ways they overcame challenges, realized goals and ultimately enhanced strengths. I assume that reflecting on the past can support strengths for the future. Future research should do an in-depth analysis of how reflecting on achievements and success in the past supports strengths and a “hope in” the future.

**Practical recommendations.** Participants described their overall experiences as positive; however, they initially had difficulty identifying their strengths. With the exception of the mission and opportunity roles, the DSAO/QQDSP’s hope and strength based-practices are not formalized. I recommend educating staff members about hope and strengths-based practices and the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992) in an effort to further enhance participants’ experiences. Staff members can subsequently train volunteers and share hope and strengths-based practices with sailors. I also recommend that the DSAO/QQDSP continue to encourage sailors to be companion sailors or to join the BOD.

The DSAO/QQDSP heavily relies on program subsidies and outside funding to maintain low program costs. I recommend that the DSAO/QQDSP organize an event, formally inviting potential sponsors and donors to sail with sailors. Sailors can demonstrate their strengths (e.g., desire to share the passion) and extend their positive experiences to potential sponsors or donors in an effort to secure funding. The goal (i.e., “hope in” a shared future) would be to challenge and transform sponsors’ and donors’ practical consciousness in relation to the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992). Such
an event would also empower participants to use their strengths and contribute to the DSAO/QQDSP.

My study highlights the practical implications of using a sociological lens to implement and evaluate outdoor recreation programs for PWDs. The use of complimentary power relations (Paraschak, 2013a) is essential in order to challenge the hegemonic relationships that have traditionally marginalized PWDs. In this sense, sport managers must not perceive themselves to be “experts”. Rather they should consider themselves as human resources who can enhance the strengths and hopes of others while concomitantly being open to the possibilities of their own transformation through such relationships. In the field of sport management, hope and strengths-based practices can be used within an organization by using or enhancing employees’, volunteers’ or members’ strengths in an effort to overcome challenges and/or to enhance the effectiveness of the processes required to achieve organizational goals.
REFERENCES


Paraschak, V. (2001). I Have Met the Other, and S (he) is Me. *Avante, 7*(2), 77-83.


Shorey, H. S., Little, T., & Rand, K. (2009). Validation of the Revised Snyder Hope Scale (HS-R2): The will, the ways, and now the goals for positive future outcomes. Unpublished Manuscript, University of Kansas, Lawrence.


communicators of corporate values. *Leadership & Organization Development 


practice models: Guest editors' introductory comments. *Therapeutic Recreation 

Mentors' experiences of using the Active Mentoring model to support older adults 
with intellectual disability to participate in community groups. *Journal of 

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Types of Sailboats Available at the QQDSP

Martin 16: Jay and her friend sailing at the QQDSP

Sonar
Liberty
Appendix B: Wind Lass, Sip & Puff and Hoyer Lift

Windlass and Sip & Puff
Custom hoyer lift at LMYC – Experience Disabled Sailing Windsor
Appendix C: Leisure and Well-Being Model

(Hood & Carruthers, 2007, p. 310)
## Appendix D: Assessment Tools for the Flourishing through Leisure Model

### Table 6

**Assessments that Focus on Internal Strengths in the Domains of the Flourishing through Leisure Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Focus/Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Domain</td>
<td>Discover Your Passions Interview</td>
<td>Interview questions designed to ascertain those things that most interest and excite a participant in leisure</td>
<td>McGill (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passion Scale</td>
<td>14-item scale designed to measure harmonious and obsessive passion toward activities</td>
<td>Vallerand et al. (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic</td>
<td>Scale that determines which strategies for increasing happiness are a best fit for a participant; strategies can then be incorporated into leisure experiences</td>
<td>Lyubomirsky (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengths Discovery Assessment</td>
<td>Interview protocol, using a conversational style; focuses on the strengths and assets in youths’ lives and clarifies aspirations</td>
<td>Clark (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological/Emotional Domain</td>
<td>Positivity Test</td>
<td>10-item scale to help people measure the level of positive to negative emotion they experience, called their &quot;positivity ratio&quot;</td>
<td>Fredrickson (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-2 (BERS-2)</td>
<td>Rating scale designed to measure a child's strengths, including interpersonal, family, intrapersonal, school, affective, and career strength</td>
<td>Epstein (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Domain</td>
<td>Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS)</td>
<td>15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of dispositional mindfulness, namely, open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present</td>
<td>Brown &amp; Ryan (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Domain</td>
<td>Home and Community Social Behavior Scales</td>
<td>5-point observation rating scale to identify areas of strength in peer relations and self-management in social situations</td>
<td>Merrell &amp; Caldarella (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Domain</td>
<td>Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale</td>
<td>Self-rating of effort being put into physical activity based on sensations that one experiences during the activity</td>
<td>Borg (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Domain</td>
<td>VIA Strengths Assessment</td>
<td>Identifies character strengths and virtues; long form and short form available</td>
<td>Peterson &amp; Seligman (2004)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Anderson & Heyne, 2012, p.98)
Appendix E: Saleebey’s Strengths-based Questions

*Survival questions:* Given all the challenges in your life that you have described, how have you managed to survive, even thrive? How have you been able to meet the tests that have been a part of your lot? What was your frame of mind as you faced these trials? What have you been able to learn about yourself and your world during these struggles? Which of these ordeals has given you special insight, resolve, or skill? What are the special abilities and traits do you now rely on?

*Support questions:* What people have given you encouragement and assistance? Who are those special people upon whom you can depend? What is it that these individuals offer that is matchless? How did you find them or how did they come to you? What do you think they were responding to in you that made them what to be of assistance? What associations, institutions, and/or organizations have been especially supportive or comforting in the past?

*Exception questions:* (from the practitioners of solution-focused therapy) When things are going well in life, what is different? Have you had times in your past when these problems and concerns were not a part of your life? If so, what was different? What moments, incidents, or people in your life have given you special insight, resilience, and/or courage? What elements of these special times do you want to recapture?

*Possibility questions:* What do you now want out of life? What are your hopes, dreams, and visions? How far are you along in realizing these dreams? What people or personal qualities are giving you a boost toward your dreams? What do you like to do? What do you want to do? How would you like to see your life in a few months from now? How can I be of help in reaching your goals?

*Esteem questions:* When people say nice things about you, what are they likely to say? What is it about your life, your situation, and your accomplishments that give you real self-respect? What gives you real satisfaction in your life? When did you begin to believe that you can accomplish some of the things that are important to you?

*Perspective questions:* What are your theories and ideas about what’s happening in your life; about what is causing you pain or trouble? How do you comprehend, and make sense of these? How would you explain your situation to someone else?

*Change questions:* What are your ideas about how things in your life—thoughts, feelings, relationships, behavior, situations—might change? In the past, what has worked for you in making a better life for yourself, or in solving a problem? What do you think you should or could do now to bring about a positive change in your life? Can I help?

*Meaning questions:* Do you have a set of beliefs or values that give you guidance, courage, and/or comfort? What are these? Can you strengthen or draw upon them?

(Saleebey, 2008, p. 137-138)
Appendix F: Recruitment Email

Hello everyone!

I hope you are all enjoying the off-season. As some of you know, I am a graduate student at the University of Windsor in Kinesiology. I am conducting a research project on the strengths of the QQDSP’s sailors, volunteers and staff members. I would like to hear about your experiences.

The purpose of my study is to learn more about the sailing experiences of all participants (i.e., sailors, volunteers, Board of Director members and staff) involved in the QQDSP. I would like to set up an interview with you to discuss your experience and to learn about the strengths that you used, shared and/or enhanced within the program. I also want your perspectives of what you think the strengths of the QQDSP are. The interview will take place in person or over the telephone and will last for approximately one hour. You will also be asked to share a photograph that best represents your experience within the QQDSP. If you do not have a photograph you will be able to choose such a photograph from an album that will be provided.

To be eligible to participate in an interview, you must have sailed at least five times with the QQDSP within the last two years and be able to clearly verbally communicate.

Please take the time to read the attached letter of information. It will contain specific details regarding my research project.

Please let me know if you can help out with my study. You can contact me via telephone or e-mail.

I think you will find this project valuable!

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you!

Sincerely,

James Anderson
XXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca
XXX-XXX-XXXX
Appendix G: Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study about the experiences of people involved with the QQDSP.

Just a reminder, as we previously discussed in our correspondence, you have the option of using your true name or a pseudonym. However I cannot guarantee your anonymity due to the relatively small size of the QQDSP. Would like to remain anonymous?

I would like to record our interview with your permission. The recording of our interview will ensure that I have an accurate record of the information that you share with me. Let me know if at any point you would like me to stop the recording.

Do you have any questions before we start? Don’t hesitate to ask me questions at any point during the interview.

Photograph Elicitation

1. Can you please share/select the photograph that you believe best represents your experience within the QQDSP.

2. Why did you choose this photo?
   a. When was it taken?
   b. What is going on in this photo?
   c. How do you think it represents the QQDSP?
   d. Can you explain that day?
Questions

Background – General Questions

1. Tell me about how you became involved with the QQDSP.
2. Did you have any prior sailing experience?

Strengths

1. How would you describe your experience with the QQDSP? (SQ1)
2. What strengths did you have? (SQ1)
   a. Coming to this program, why were these strengths relevant?
3. What strengths have you enhanced through your involvement with the QQDSP? (SQ1)
   a. Did anyone within the QQDSP help you enhance your strengths?
   b. How did that happen?
   c. Were there any resources within the QQDSP to help you enhance your strengths? (SQ2)
   d. What were they? (SQ2)
4. What challenges have you encountered within the QQDSP that provided opportunities to develop your strengths? (SQ1)
   a. Tell me what happened.

Hope

1. What goals did you have at the start of the sailing season (e.g., personal or administrative, etc)? (SQ1)
   a. Why were these goals important to you?
b. Were some of these goals achieved as you interacted with others in this program or at home while doing this program?

c. How did you plan to reach your goals?

d. Did you doubt your ability to reach them at any point?

e. Did you have to alter your plans at any point to reach your goals? How did that go?

f. Can you tell me an incident that captures any of these moments?

g. What strengths did you use?

2. Have the people within the QQDSP influenced or shaped you in a positive way? (SQ1)

   a. Can you provide a specific example?

3. How do you think you have positively influenced or shaped the people around you in the QQDSP? (SQ1)

   a. Can you provide a specific example?

Organizational Characteristics

1. What behaviours, beliefs and/or values did you see being shared within the QQDSP? (SQ2)

   a. Can you give me an example?

2. What kinds of opportunities, other than sailing, are available for sailors and volunteers within the QQDSP? (SQ2)

   a. What types of activities have you been involved with?

3. What types of support systems does the QQSDP provide (can be social, technical or others)? (SQ2)

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a. Did you take advantage of any of these support systems?

b. Can you tell me a story of how you used a support system this past summer?

4. What strengths do you see in QQDSP’s leadership? (i.e., the BOD as a whole, the commodore or the program manager) (SQ2)
   a. What resources does the leadership provide for this program?

_Social Model of Disability_

1. The social model of disability describes impairment as a medical condition (physical or mental) that leads to a “disability”, and disability as being the interaction between a person living with impairment and their environment. For example, a building that is inaccessible to a person in a wheelchair makes a person disabled. A person’s impairment does not prevent them from entering the building; rather the building’s lack of accessible infrastructure prevents a person from entering (Oliver, 1992).
   a. Do you think the QQDSP and its participants contribute towards this understanding of disability? Why? Why not? (SQ2)

_Closing Statement_

Thank you for your time. Is there anything that you would like to clarify or add? If you think of anything later, feel free to contact me. I will send you a draft of my initial results. You will be able to review them and let me know if you agree with the results or would like to clarify anything that we talked about.
Appendix H: Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: HOPE AND STRENGTHS WITHIN ADAPTIVE SAILING: NARRATIVES FROM THE QUEEN’S QUAY DISABLED SAILING PROGRAM

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by me, James Anderson, from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Windsor. Results from the research study will contribute to my master’s thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact me (XXXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca, XXX-XXX-XXXX) or my advisor, Dr. Victoria Paraschak (XXXXXXXX@uwindsor.ca, XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXXX)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to learn about the experiences of all participants (i.e., sailors, volunteers and staff members) involved in the Queen Quay Disabled Sailing Program (QQDSP). Specifically, I would like to learn about participants’ goals and strengths that were used, shared or enhanced within the program. I also would like your perspectives of what you think the strengths of the QQDSP are.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask to interview you either in person or over the telephone. The interview will last for approximately one hour. All interviews will be audio recorded. I will also ask you to share and discuss a photograph that best represents your experience within the QQDSP. Hardcopy photographs will be digitally scanned. Digital photographs will be archived. If you do not have a photograph you will be able to choose a photograph from an album that will be provided.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is minimal risk and discomfort associated with this study. You should not experience risk any greater than the risks you encounter in your everyday interactions with others. Your participation in the QQDSP will not be adversely affected.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The interview will give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences with the QQDSP.

The research will contribute to the understanding of outdoor recreation for people with disabilities.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

No compensation will be provided for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Due to the nature of the interviews, anonymity cannot be assured. Limited personal data about participants will be collected. Participants have the option to use a pseudonym or their true name when the results are reported.
All written records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Human Kinetics Building at the University of Windsor to which only my advisor, Dr. Victoria Paraschak and I will have access. All electronic records will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to them. Audio recordings will be deleted from the recording device as soon as the files are transferred to a password-protected computer file. Participants will be permitted to review their audio recording upon request. All written and electronic records and photographs will be retained for six months, after which they will be shredded and deleted.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in the study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences. Your participation in the QQDSP will not be adversely affected. Any participant, who wishes to withdrawal from the study, I will ask to continue to use your data, which you will be able to confirm or deny at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. I may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

A final summary of the research findings will be available to participants once the research project is completed.

Web address: [http://www1.uwindsor.ca/reb/study-results](http://www1.uwindsor.ca/reb/study-results)
Date when results are available: July, 31, 2015

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study HOPE AND STRENGTHS OF DISABLED SAILING: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE QQDSP as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant ____________________________ Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

Signature of Investigator ____________________________ Date
Appendix I: Preliminary Coding List

Hope (Jacobs, 2005, 2008; Snyder, 2002)
- Identification of goals
- Development of goals through interactions with others
- Commitment to a shared future
- Envisioning multiple pathways
- Overcoming challenges
- Ability to cope with stress
- Awareness of resources and participants that can help achieve goals

Strengths (Saleebey, 1996, 2011)
- Identification of existing strengths
- Development of strengths through challenges
- Development of strengths through access to resources
- Development of strengths through interactions with others
- Opportunity to utilize strengths

Duality of Structure (Gidden, 1984)
- Participants being shaped by structures or interactions with others
- Participants shaping structures or others through interactions
- Rules and/or resources that shape structures

Empowering Community Organizations (Manton & Salem, 1995)
- Group-based belief system
  - Values that align with DSAO’s mission statement
  - Values that are shared with others
- Opportunity role structure
  - Active involvement in other areas besides sailing
- Support system
  - Support or help from the program’s resources
  - Support or help from participants
- Leadership
  - Impact on participants (i.e., inspiration)
  - Ability to mobilize resources
  - Type of decision-making

Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1992)
- Perception of disability
- Disability as a social construct
- Interaction of a PWD and their environment
Appendix J: Refined Coding List

Overall Experiences
- Freedom and independence
- Sense of community

Hope (i.e, goals)
- Participation
- Skill development
- Giving back to the community

Strengths
- Interpersonal skills
- Desire to share the passion
- Commitment
- Sailing experience

Group-based Beliefs
- Belief in oneself
- Valuing the experience
- Teamwork

Opportunity Role Structures
- Provider roles
- Receiver roles

Support Systems
- Emotional support
- Social support

Leadership
Appendix K: Conceptual Baggage

Researcher Positionality

It is important to recognize that I am a Canadian-born, white, able-bodied male who has been privileged to access higher education and to participate in organized sport. In doing so, I acknowledge that my assumptions are partly grounded in the resultant social experiences. I also have a background in sailing. My sailing experiences provided a common ground of knowledge and interest with participants, which enabled me to form relationships quite easily.

How I Got Involved in Sailing

Sailing is often perceived to be an elitist sport for wealthy or “upper class” individuals. My sailing experiences were contrary to this perception. My first introduction to sailing was when I was 11 years old. I attended a low-income middle school (grades 6-8) and many students’ families lived in subsidized government housing\textsuperscript{52}. One spring, my class went on a field trip to the Rocky Point Sailing Association (RPSA), which offered low cost programs to low-income schools. I had a terrible experience. My group was the only boat to capsize (i.e., flip over) in the water. In spite of this, my mom convinced my sister and I to participate in the RPSA’s summer camp, where I had an amazing experience. It was the beginning of a meaningful 14-year relationship with the RPSA.

The RPSA welcomed everyone. It didn’t matter who you were or where you came from. Their mission was to enable everyone in the community the opportunity to

\textsuperscript{52} My family did not live in subsidized housing, but rather in a small house. My mom, as a single mother, supported my sister and I while maintaining mortgage payments until we graduated high school, after which she downsized.
experience sailing and what the Burrard Inlet⁵³ had to offer. I eventually completed all my Sail Canada sailing certifications, after which the RPSA gave me the opportunity to volunteer. I volunteered for a few years before being hired by the RPSA as a coach. After coaching for five years, I was hired as the Sailing Director. As Sailing Director I was responsible for all management aspects of the RPSA, including adult and youth programs; winter, spring, summer and fall programs; and membership and competitive programs.

During my first year as Sailing Director I was browsing through old program files when I discovered a letter. The letter was from the summer of 2004. My mom wrote the letter and addressed it to the Sailing Director at the time. In the letter my mom described how she was a single mother raising two kids. She explained how I had an amazing experience the previous summer and that she wanted me to continue to grow within the RPSA. However, she could not afford to register me for a second year and asked for financial assistance. Reading this letter had a profound impact on me (although I have never told my mom that I found the letter). I realized how my experiences within the RPSA shaped me. I also realized how as Sailing Director, I was in a position where I could extend my positive experiences and shape kids that may be in similar situations to my own background. My life may have followed different pathways if it had not been for my mom and my involvement with the RPSA. And for that I will always be grateful. I met my best friends through sailing, volunteering and coaching. Sailing and working with the RPSA enabled me to develop new strengths, enhance my existing strengths, give back to my community and fund my post-secondary education and world travels.

⁵³ The Burrand inlet connects to the Pacific Ocean. There is diverse wildlife and ecosystems.
My experiences with the RPSA ultimately played a part in influencing my decision to apply to the University of Windsor’s Master of Human Kinetics program. Based on my personal experiences Vicky was the ideal thesis advisor. At the time, I had no idea that a Hope and Strengths Perspective existed. However, after reflecting on my personal experiences, I recognize how hope and strengths-based practices shaped me. Knowing the positive impacts that sailing had on my life, it just made sense to explore the experiences of participants within an adaptive sailing program.

**My Personal Experience within the QQDSP.**

I worked with the QQDSP from May until August 2014 (the length of the sailing season). Prior to working with the QQDSP, I had very limited experience working with PWDs and was still unaware of a Hope and Strengths Perspective. I vividly remember the Opening Day event. It was my first time interacting with the QQDSP’s participants. I was overwhelmed. I did not know how to speak with PWDs. At that moment I felt like an outsider, like the “other”.

During my initial days with the QQDSP I was guilty of perceiving myself as the “expert” because of my education and experience managing the RPSA. There were many incidents that altered and enhanced my perceptions of PWDs. I wish I could share them all, but I will have to save those stories for another time. Nonetheless, I will share one incident. Early in the season Natasha and I were helping load a participant into a sailboat. He knew that we were new to the program and guided us through his transfer procedure.

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54 Opening Day is an event to celebrate the sailing season. The QQDSP’s participants, including Outreach Groups, attend and a free BBQ is offered. The event also gives participants the opportunities to socialize with each other and pay their membership fees. In some cases it is the first time that participants have seen each other since the previous sailing season.

55 The “other” is a term sometimes used to describe individuals who are perceived to not fit within mainstream society (e.g., PWDs, aboriginal peoples, etc). For an extended discussion see Paraschak, V. (2001). I Have Met the Other, and S (he) is Me. *Avante*, 7(2), 77-83.
He also helped us in another way. He said, “don’t talk to me like a patient, talk to me like a person”. He explained that he has spent most his life living in a hospital surrounded by care workers, nurses and doctors. Sailing was his opportunity to feel free and independent. He also explained why it was important to him to buy me a coffee. He explained that buying a coffee for someone gave him a sense of normalcy. It made him feel like any other person who would do the same thing. He further explained that he was so accustomed to being cared for that when he had the opportunity to do something for someone else it gave him a sense of meaning and joy. My interactions with this participant shaped how I interacted with all the QQDSP’s participants. I began to focus on their abilities, forgetting about their disabilities. I realized participants were like me. We all identified as sailors and often shared other similar interests. The QQDSP’s participants helped me just as much as I helped them. Although there were challenging days, the QQDSP’s community supported me and helped me to develop new strengths and to enhance my existing strengths.

**The Hope and Strengths Perspective**

The Hope and Strengths Perspective is more than a theoretical framework for my thesis. It became a life philosophy. I had many lonely and long days and nights while writing my thesis. A Hope and Strengths Perspective gave me the strength to continue in addition to hope in the future and from the past. When I encountered a thesis-related challenge I would often think to myself, “a high-hope person finds alternative pathways to his/her goals” and “challenges provide opportunities to enhance strengths”. I also realized the importance of my hope-enhancing environment. My Windsor colleagues and friends, especially my roommates gave me the strength and support I needed to follow
my pathways to finishing this thesis. Going forward in life, a Hope and Strengths Perspective will be a philosophy that I will continue to follow.
## Appendix L: Participants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role(s)</th>
<th>Supplementary Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>BOD member – Secretary</td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer companion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 1999.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Sailing on-and-off with the QQDSP since 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candi</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 2000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krista</td>
<td>Volunteer companion</td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>Sailing with the QQDSP since 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
<td>Staff member – Dock crew</td>
<td>Staff member for the 2014 season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikko</td>
<td>Volunteer companion</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinky</td>
<td>Staff member – Office manager</td>
<td>Staff member for the 2013 and 2014 seasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarai</td>
<td>BOD member – Commodore</td>
<td>Sarai has been commodore since 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer companion</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
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