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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Joshua Ray Pate entitled "Exploring a Training Facility for Elite Athletes with Physical Disabilities: The Case of Lakeshore Foundation." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Kinesiology and Sport Studies.

Robin L. Hardin, Major Professor

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Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Exploring a Training Facility for Elite Athletes with Physical Disabilities:

The Case of Lakeshore Foundation

A Dissertation Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Joshua Ray Pate

May 2012

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who mean the most to me, who supported me during this three-year process, and sacrificed time, money, and so many other things that can never be counted or repaid. To Julie and Hudson, to Mom and Dad, to Memaw Pate, and to Memaw and Paw Arnold: It is through your prayers and support that this stage of my life was possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for guidance, patience, and most of all for surrounding me with positive influences who have mentored and molded me, most of whom are listed here. I want to express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Julie, and son, Hudson. Words will never match how much I love them and cherish the future we have together. I will never be able to thank them enough for the sacrifices they made. I thank my mother, Linda, and late father, Louie, both of whom never ceased with optimism and reinforcement and taught me the meaning of hard work and keeping God first. I am also thankful to my grandparents, Ann, Maxine, and Buster, who always believed I could succeed.

I thank my advisor, my mentor, and my friend, Dr. Rob Hardin. I am indebted for the help and guidance he showed me from the multiple telephone calls about the doctoral program to the conversations across the hallway of HPER for three years. Dominate. I thank Dr. Brody Ruihley for our business meetings and for challenging me to be a better researcher, a better teacher, a better friend, and most of all a better person. TCB. To Tim Mirabito, I am thankful for our Friday lunches and for being a friend, both listening when I had complaints and celebrating when I had milestones.

I am thankful to my committee members Dr. Steven Waller, Dr. Lars Dzikus, and Dr. Patrick Biddix, each of whom contributed greatly to shaping me as a doctoral student. I also want to thank Dr. Margaret Sallee, who taught me how to conduct qualitative research, and Dr. Mary Hums, a leader in sport and disability research who provided guidance from afar. I want to express my gratitude to Professor Jim Bemiller for allowing me to affiliate my name with such a prestigious organization like Partners in Sports. I thank Dr. Joy DeSensi for teaching me how to

teach appropriately and do things the right way, and Dr. Gene Fitzhugh for always providing words of encouragement. I want to express thanks to the rest of the faculty and department staff members, particularly Betty Carver, Lynnetta Holbrook, Jane Johns, and Margy Wirtz-Henry for their daily support and assistance. I thank University of Tennessee sports information department legends like Bud Ford, Gus Manning, and Haywood Harris for letting me volunteer my services whenever possible, as well as Tom Satkowiak, John Painter, and numerous student workers who found ways for me to be a small part of Tennessee athletics. Finally, I thank my peers and colleagues at the University of Tennessee who provided support at all times: Landon Huffman, Sarah Stokowski, Kelly Balfour, Sharron Hutton, Victor Martin, Ellie Odenheimer, LeQuez Spearman, and all the Partners in Sports students and board members. My sincere appreciation goes well beyond this brief acknowledgement, and I will forever be thankful.

ABSTRACT

In 2003, Lakeshore Foundation became the first facility to be designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and is a training destination of choice for elite athletes with disabilities. The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) explore how an organization became a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site; and (2) explore why elite athletes and coaches are attracted to Lakeshore Foundation's Paralympic training facility. Lakeshore Foundation was examined through systems theory and stakeholder theory, whereas social construction theory was used in the examination of elite athletes training at Lakeshore Foundation. Case study methodology was used in this study, with semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, observations, and document analysis as the data collection methods of choice. Findings revealed that Lakeshore Foundation's training site proposal to the USOC offered specific business, facility, and service plans of how it would alleviate the crowded training facilities at other locations and provide a unique service for U.S. Paralympic athletes to train in preparation for international competition. Accessible facilities created an international reputation for Lakeshore Foundation, but Paralympic teams chose to train at Lakeshore Foundation primarily due to the employees' personal attention and focus toward Paralympic sport. This study revealed that environmental attributes of service quality such as facilities may influence consumer participation, but the functional attributes of service quality are essential to consumer retention. The service quality attributes offered by Lakeshore provided a comfortable and consistent environment for Paralympic teams as they trained, removing the typical daily barriers of access and social acceptance that may have been present at other training sites and centers. Implications from this study with regard to inclusion and integration shed light on how people with disabilities may feel

in environments that were designed for an able-bodied population as well as how social acceptance may impact the experiences of people with disabilities.

Keywords: Accessibility; Americans with Disabilities Act; Case Study; Paralympic Games; Service Quality

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Lakeshore Foundation Background

At the elite level of sport for people with physical disabilities, 320 athletes represented the United States in the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing (Team USA, n.d.a). Yet, few facilities are designed for elite athletic training at the Paralympic level. There were 12 Olympic Training Sites designated for more than 540 athletes to specialize their athletic training in preparation for the Olympic Games as of 2011 (Team USA, n.d.b). Yet, only three of those sites were designated as Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites for the 320 Paralympians: Oklahoma City National High Performance Center, the University of Central Oklahoma, and Lakeshore Foundation in Alabama. The Oklahoma City National High Performance Center received U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site designation in 2009, and the facility sponsors resources for rowing, canoeing, and kayaking (Oklahoma City National High Performance Center, n.d.). The University of Central Oklahoma was designated as a Paralympic Training Site in 2005 with a fitness center, pools, tennis courts, and a track while offering training camps and opportunities for Paralympic volleyball and track and field (United States Olympic Committee, n.d.).

The original U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site is Lakeshore Foundation. A private, not-for-profit 501(c)3 foundation operating in the Homewood suburb of Birmingham, AL, the facility houses an aquatics center, fieldhouse, an indoor track, a shooting range, and a fitness center accessible to people with disabilities (United States Olympic Committee, n.d.). The organization is one of the nation's leading centers for advancement of athletics for people with disabilities and, as of 2012, was the only center of its kind in the Southeast with accessible training facilities (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.b). Lakeshore Foundation is governed by a Board

of Directors that includes community leaders in business, healthcare, government, education, and sports, and is managed day-to-day by a president who has been an advocate for disabled sport since the 1990s. Lakeshore Foundation is located on a 45-acre campus with athletic training facilities dedicated specifically to the development of athletes with physical disabilities. Lakeshore operates with the following business guidelines:

- Vision: To improve the lives of people with physical disability around the world.
- Mission: To enable people with physical disability and chronic health conditions to lead healthy, active, and independent lifestyles through physical activity, sport, recreation, and research.
- Values: Passion, creating opportunities, integrity, changing expectations. (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.d,§ "Vision, Mission, Values")

Lakeshore Foundation "promotes independence" for people with disabilities by providing "opportunities to pursue active, healthy lifestyles" (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.g, para. 1). The organization offers a range of opportunities for both children and adults with regard to sport for people with disabilities. Programs are offered for people with amputations, arthritis, cardiac conditions, cerebral palsy, chronic pain, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, stroke, visual impairments, and other disorders (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.g).

Lakeshore Foundation's service to people with disabilities transformed the location into a popular training site for athletes with disabilities to compete internationally (Lakeshore employee, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Lakeshore Foundation offers a competitive athletics program for youth and adults with physical disabilities in the sports of goalball, marksmanship, power soccer, swimming, track and field, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair

rugby, and wheelchair tennis (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.b). At the elite Paralympic level of sport, Lakeshore Foundation is home to several training camps for U.S. national teams in the sports of archery, power soccer, sailing, tennis, track and field, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair rugby (United States Olympic Committee, n.d.).

In February 2003, the United States Olympic Committee (hereafter referred to as USOC) designated Lakeshore Foundation as the first U.S. training site for both Olympic and Paralympic sports, which made it the first location to receive Paralympic recognition for training (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.f). The program partnered the USOC with elite athlete training centers around the country to "allow American athletes the best training venues and facilities for their sport development" (Team USA, n.d.b, para. 1). The designation allowed training facilities 10 recognized benefits, according to the USOC, among which are the ability to attract top athletes and coaches to the facility and funding opportunities (United States Olympic Committee, 2010). The designation solidified Lakeshore's reputation as the premier destination for elite athletic training for people with disabilities, and the organization's success rate among athletes validated its stature. Lakeshore sent 36 athletes and coaches to the Paralympic Games between 1988 and 2008, the most from any single U.S. organization (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.c).

For Paralympians and those athletes aspiring to compete at that elite level, three training sites have been recognized for their services to athletes with disabilities and provide training facilities needed to prepare for the Paralympic Games. Two are located in the Southwestern United States in Oklahoma, and the other is in the Southeastern United States in Alabama. The lack of opportunities for elite athletes with disabilities to train at accessible sites in other regions of the country sheds light on a greater issue of accessibility of fitness and training facilities and

similar places of public accommodation. More than 20 years following the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (hereafter referred to as ADA), facilities continue to face challenges in complying with accessibility and ADA regulations regarding facility design and staff education about disability. Perhaps more importantly, services for people with disabilities equal to those offered able-bodied individuals are few and far between. Therefore, service quality's functional attribute (e.g., how a service is delivered) and environmental attribute (e.g., perceptions of facilities and surroundings) were explored during the study of Lakeshore Foundation. It is important to analyze those services for people with disabilities in order to shed light on how to better meet the needs of an underrepresented population. This study set out to examine those services.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to construct the realities of elite athletes with disabilities in their choice to train at Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. Lakeshore Foundation's training site was chosen for this study because it was the first to be designated as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and became a destination of choice for elite Paralympic athletes and teams to train in the Southeast region of the country. The purpose of this study was two-fold: (1) explore how an organization became a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site; and (2) explore why elite athletes and coaches are attracted to Lakeshore Foundation's Paralympic training facility. Systems theory and stakeholder theory were used to examine Lakeshore Foundation's application process of becoming a designated training site, whereas social construction theory was used in the examination of elite athletes training at Lakeshore Foundation.

In 1986, Louis Harris & Associates conducted the first national poll of people with disabilities seeking a greater understanding of demographics and what individuals faced due to their disabilities (Burgdorf, 1991). The poll reported that two-thirds of all people with disabilities had not attended a sporting event in the past year, compared to 50% of all adult U.S. residents. People with disabilities cited isolation and lack of participation as reasons for not attending, explaining that they did not feel welcome and did not feel there was safe access to public facilities due to physical barriers (Burgdorf, 1991). It should be noted the Harris poll was conducted prior to the enactment of the ADA and percentages may have changed with regard to sport and recreation activity. Still, a segment of the population—a 2009 report stated that 12.6% of the U.S. population consisted of people with disabilities, both of the physical and cognitive nature (Erickson, Lee, & Von Schrader, 2009)—reported feeling unwelcome and unsafe in a public sport or recreation setting, which sends red flags around the sport industry. Sport is often viewed as a microcosm of society and a product of social reality (Eitzen, 2001; Frey & Eitzen, 1991; Roberts, 2011). Therefore, if a person with a disability is made to feel unwelcome or unsafe in a social setting, such feelings may be mirrored in sport or recreation. Sport, particularly disability sport, also can be a tool to create change in society by "affecting how people think and feel about social conditions" (Woods, 2007, p. 23). However, individuals must participate in sport to create such an effect on society. Despite the Harris poll having been conducted prior to ADA enactment, no evidence has disputed claims of isolation and unwelcomed feelings as the primary reasons people with disabilities do not participate in social events with regard to sport or physical activity (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002; Coleman, 1971; Louis Harris & Associates, 1986; Rimmer, Rowland, & Yamaki, 2007).

Physical activity is essential for people with physical disabilities. The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (2009) suggested that adults with physical disabilities should get at least two and a half hours of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity spread throughout the week and muscle-strengthening activities at least two or more days per week for health benefits. Adults who cannot meet such suggested guidelines should routinely engage in physical activity and avoid inactivity (National Center on Physical Activity and Disability, 2009). Despite these suggested guidelines, 56% of adults with disabilities reported not engaging in physical activity—a much higher percentage than the national average of 25.1% of adults who said they have no leisure-time physical activity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Among adults with physical disabilities, only 12% participated regularly in physical activity of moderate intensity (Kosma, Cardinal, & McCubbin, 2005). Low levels of physical activity for people with disabilities may "decrease their aerobic capacity, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility, all of which have the potential for restricting functional independence and increasing the risk for chronic disease and secondary complications" (Washburn, Zhu, McAuley, Frogley & Figoni, 2002, p. 193). Such inactivity may be related to low motivation within the individuals (Kosma, Cardinal, & Rintala, 2002). Prosen (1965) explained that an individual's motivation depends on needs, but also on personality, and those vary among individuals. More recent scholarly work was specific with regard to motivational forces in sport participation among people with disabilities, noting the desire to demonstrate competence to others and to socialize with other people (Buffart, Westendorp, van den Berg-Emons, Stam, & Roebroeck, 2009; Harada & Siperstein, 2009; Page, O'Connor, & Peterson, 2001).

Socialization and proving competencies, however, has not translated into people with disabilities embracing the idea that physical activity is essential in their daily lives. Among the reasons explaining why individuals with disabilities do not seek physical activity is inaccessibility of facilities (Rimmer, Riley, Wang, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004). With regard to a fitness and training facility, a person who does not feel that he or she can gain access to the facility or equipment is likely to disengage in participation. Facilities must be accessible to people with disabilities, and fitness and training centers must provide access to equipment to avoid discrimination against people with disabilities.

A subworld of people with disabilities includes athletes with disabilities who train and compete in sport at the recreational and competitive level. This study is an examination of a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, which ultimately may shed light on how facility managers seek to eliminate discriminatory practices of excluding a portion of the population from "equal enjoyment of goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation" (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990, § 12182). Fitness and training facilities are places of public accommodation, as defined by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990). Focusing on the number of people with disabilities participating in sport, however, shifts the focus away from providing accessibility for everyone, regardless of ability. Identifying a number brings potential for critics to argue the number is too high to expect all facilities to comply, or too low to make it relevant for change. Thus, demand for offering accessible opportunities to people with disabilities training recreationally or for competitive international events such as the Paralympic Games should not be central to the discussion. The reality, however, is that demand is central to business. Fitness

and training facilities are places of business, and sound business decisions keep organizations in operation or make them successful. Therefore, demand is essential to the business model of a fitness facility in that it dictates what is offered. Demand for accessible training facilities may not be high in general, but the demand for accessibility is high among elite athletes with physical disabilities due to the amount of athletes compared to the accessible facilities offered.

Previous research has been conducted on elite sport and elite athletes at the Olympic level as scholars have examined Olympic sport organizations (Chappelet & Bayle, 2006; Chelladurai & Madella, 2006; Ferrand & Torrigiani, 2005). Others have explored media coverage of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games on a national and international scale (Golden, 2003; Groggin & Newell, 2000). Yet overall, research is lacking in the area of the Paralympic Games in general (Gilbert & Schantz, 2008) and sport and disability as a whole (Prystupa, Prystupa, & Bolach, 2006). More specifically, Paralympic sport is understudied in the areas of access (Gold & Gold, 2007), athletes (Banack, 2009), and governance and structure (Hums & MacLean, 2008; Hums, Moorman, & Wolff, 2003). This study addresses the three areas of Paralympic sport that have gaps in research: access, athletes, and governance structure.

More than 20 years after the ADA was signed into law to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities, fitness and training facilities have not been welcoming to people with disabilities (Cardinal & Spaziani, 2003; Meyers, Anderson, Miller, Shipp, & Hoenig, 2002; Nary, Froehlich, & White, 2000; Rimmer et al., 2004). As a result, the USOC has been slow to recognize training locations that are accessible for elite athletes with disabilities. Twelve Olympic Training Sites held U.S. training site designations as of 2012, three of which also included a Paralympic focus: Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham, AL, the University of

Central Oklahoma in Edmond, OK, and Oklahoma City National High Performance Center in Oklahoma City, OK. Teams also train at U.S. Olympic Training Centers in Chula Vista, CA, Colorado Springs, CO, and Lake Placid, NY. Growth of the Paralympic Games internationally and within the United States should be substantial evidence that more training sites focused on Paralympic sport are needed in the country, particularly in the Northeast and Northwest regions. One possible reason that just three sites have been designated is that few fitness and training facilities present themselves as viable options to earn the designation of a U.S. training site. Lakeshore Foundation offered viable options, therefore presenting the opportunity to study how it received U.S. designation and why elite athletes with disabilities train there. This study examined Lakeshore Foundation's training site, which resulted in administrative, public relations, and marketing implications for the USOC and for facility managers with regard to people with disabilities.

Chapter I of this study provides an introduction to the topic of training facilities that are accessible for people with disabilities and outlines the purpose of this study. It offers research questions guiding the study and supporting literature on the topic. Chapter II of this study begins with an examination of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, its development from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and its application toward preventing discrimination of people with disabilities. For this study, knowledge about the ADA and its protections against discrimination with regard to facilities as well as barriers for participation is essential for understanding the development of disability sport. This study then turns to a discussion of disability sport with an exploration of its historical roots and an examination of its role in creating identity and social acceptance of people with disabilities. Included in this section

is an examination of the history and development of the Paralympic Games. The chapter concludes by exploring systems theory as well as open and closed systems in relation to Lakeshore Foundation and its subsystems. Collins' (2001) *Good to Great* assessment of organizations is then applied to Lakeshore Foundation with relation to the author's Hedgehog Concept, Confronting the Brutal Facts, and Culture of Discipline.

Chapter III presents a detailed account of the methodology used to study Lakeshore Foundation. Case study methodology was used to examine Lakeshore Foundation because the unique qualities presented by the organization as the first of three designated U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites in the United States. Merriam (2009) defined case study as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" where the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (p. 40). Case study was chosen because of the researcher's desire to understand a complex social phenomenon, the interest in insight, discovery, and interpretation, and seeking the answer to "how" and "why" questions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). This study relied on interviews, observations, and data analysis for means of data collection. Chapter IV is an overview of this study's findings, addressing the two research questions of how Lakeshore became a training site and why teams train there. Findings are presented from each method of data collection in a dialogue tone that attempts to capture the environment at Lakeshore. Finally, Chapter V is a discussion of the findings, applying the theoretical framework and literature to Lakeshore's process of becoming a training site in addition to the environment and service revealed at Lakeshore's training facility. The discussion sheds light on Lakeshore's accessibility, service quality attributes, and focus on Paralympic sport and how each offer practical implications for the USOC and athletic training site administration.

Research Questions

Guiding this study were the following research questions:

RQ1: How was Lakeshore Foundation designated as the first U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site?

RQ2: Why do Paralympic athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore Foundation?

The first research question was formed to shed light on Lakeshore's application process to become a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. For example, what was the communication between Lakeshore and the USOC prior to and during the application, and why did Lakeshore administration consciously choose to seek the designation? Was it for marketing purposes, fundraising, local exposure, due to its accessibility, or something else? The second research question was formed to determine the motivation of athletes and teams to choose Lakeshore's site rather than USOC-operated Olympic Training Centers in California, Colorado, and New York.

Positionality Statement

It is important to acknowledge my position as the researcher in this study. This study was conducted through the constructivist lens where meaning was constructed between the participants and me. I have a physical disability and entered into this study with my own biases and predispositions of the challenges people with disabilities face. In 33 years of living with a physical disability, I entered this study acknowledging that my own prior experiences would affect my choices of information to collect, the questioning I used during interviews, my decisions on what and when to observe, my interpretation of the data, and the way I presented the data in written form. Additionally, as a person with a disability studying Paralympic athletes,

it was easy for me to envision how my own life may have been different with the proper resources and opportunities. Therefore, I was at risk of romanticizing the status of the Paralympic athletes and coaches, as well as Lakeshore's facilities due to the fact I was never exposed to accessible facilities such as the athletic fieldhouse and dormitory prior to this study. It was those reasons that I approached this study with a constructivist lens, knowing that objectivity would be impossible to reach and therefore acknowledging that my biases would affect the data.

Although I used a constructivist lens for this study, I chose to withdraw my own voice from the narrative of this study to preserve the voices of the athletes, coaches, and employees so that their experiences were emphasized. I acknowledged that removing I-statements from the narrative—with the exception of this section—does not remove my biases and predispositions toward disability issues and, in fact, traditionally presents more of a positivist quality to the narrative. However, the decision was made in order to maintain an emphasis on the participants and the focus of this study, which was Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and its stakeholders.

Definitions

Following is a list of terms defined by their use in this study:

2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design: extension of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that outlined minimum standards of accessibility with regard to structural design for facilities.

Accessibility: compliance within a specific regulation or criteria that establishes a minimum level of access (Saito, 2006; Salmen, 2001).

Acquired Disability: a person who was not born with a physical impairment but rather acquired it through disease, injury, or by some other means.

Adaptive Sport: "any modification of a given sport or recreation activity to accommodate the varying ability levels of an individual with a disability" with its key feature being specialized equipment that facilitates independence (Lundberg, Taniguchi, McCormick, & Tibbs, 2011, p. 205).

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: U.S. legislation enacted in 1990 to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities and to ensure people with disabilities have access to and can enjoy facilities of varying use; referred to as the ADA (Mazumdar & Geis, 2003).

Application, 2000: Lakeshore Foundation's official application document submitted in February 2000 to the USOC for U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site designation, entitled "Application to The United States Olympic Committee for Paralympic Training Site Designation for Basketball, Tennis, Rugby, Shooting Sports, Swimming, and Weightlifting."

Congenital Disability: a person who was born with a physical impairment.

Disability: the socially constructed constraints placed upon people with impairments, present when "accommodations in social or physical contexts are not or cannot be made to allow the full participation of people with functional limitations" (Coakley, 2009, p. 50). For the purposes of this study, disability only refers to physical disability.

Facility: "all or any portion of buildings, structures, sites, complexes, equipment, rolling stock or other conveyances, roads, walks, passageways, parking lots, or other real or personal property, including the site where the building, property, structure, or equipment is located" (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, § 36.104).

Handicap: referring to an individual, as defined by others, who is "inferior and 'unable' due to perceived disabilities" (Coakley, 2009, p. 51). For the purposes of this study, handicap only refers to physical handicap.

Impairment: a "physical, sensory, or intellectual condition that potentially limits full participation in social and/or physical environments" (Coakley, 2009, p. 50). For the purposes of this study, impairment only refers to physical impairment.

People with Disabilities: individuals displaying a record of "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual," or an individual who is regarded as having such an impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990, § 12102).

Place of Public Accommodation: a facility operated by a private entity whose operations affect commerce and fall within at least one of 12 categories, four of which apply to this study:

- motion picture house, theater, concert hall, stadium, or other place of exhibition or entertainment;
- auditorium, convention center, lecture hall, or other place of public gathering;
- park, zoo, amusement park, or other place of recreation;
- gymnasium, health spa, bowling alley, golf course, or other place of exercise or recreation. (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, § 36.104)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: U.S. legislation that "protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability" and applies to employers and organizations receiving federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, para. 1).

Title III: section of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that covers places of public accommodation.

Training Facilities: sites that offer physical fitness, training, exercise, or physical activity programming and opportunities.

Universal Design: the "design of products and environments usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (Center for Universal Design, 1997, para. 1).

U.S. Designation Plan, 2010: The USOC's protocol for applying for designation as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training site, entitled "U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site Designation Plan."

U.S. Olympic Training Center: A USOC-designated training facility that offers training space and full service for Olympic and Paralympic athletes and teams such as athletic training, housing, meals, and sport science, and is operated by the USOC.

U.S. Olympic Training Site: A USOC-designated training facility that offers training space for Olympic athletes and teams and is operated by a local operator not affiliated with the USOC.

U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site: A USOC-designated training facility that offers training space for Olympic and Paralympic athletes and teams and is operated by a local operator not affiliated with the USOC.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Legal protection against discrimination must first be addressed before discussing the application toward a training facility and the operational procedures it should follow. An examination of the evolution of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and its coverage of public accommodation places training facilities in context of the protections from the ADA. Evolution of the ADA will be addressed in this chapter, followed by an examination of Title III within the ADA that addresses places of public accommodation.

Accessibility codes began appearing in the 1960s with the Specifications for Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to, and Usable by, the Physically Handicapped (Salmen, 2001). U.S. legislation against disability discrimination began with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The national legislation "protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability" and applies to employers and organizations receiving federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006, para. 1). Lobbyists held conversations with lawmakers during the late 1980s, and initial drafts of the legislation to expand protection against discrimination resulted in the passage of the ADA. The ADA defines disability with respect to an individual as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual," or if an individual displays a record of such an impairment or is regarded as having such an impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990, § 12102). The legislation was enacted to ensure people with disabilities have access to and can enjoy facilities of varying use (Mazumdar & Geis, 2003).

Levels of guidance on accessibility of facilities are exemplified within the passage of the legislation protecting people with disabilities from discrimination through laws, regulations, and standards (Salmen, 2001). Laws come from legislative bodies such as U.S. Congress or state legislatures to address concerns, and the ADA was a law enacted to address discrimination against people with disabilities (Salmen, 2001). Regulations are created by an enforcement agency of a government entity, much like Title III of the ADA required specific design standards for places of public accommodation (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990; Salmen, 2001). Standards are technical criteria surrounding an issue such as the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (Hereafter referred to as ADAAG) and the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design suggesting minimum standards of accessibility (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010; Salmen, 2001). The ADAAG was adopted into the ADA's appendix, and the Standards for Accessible Design were revisions to the ADA's Title II and Title III regulations (Salmen, 2001).

Section 504 established groundwork for much of the ADA, although the ADA expanded protection against discrimination from entities not receiving federal funds (Jones, 1991). The expansion of protection shifted the landscape of disability legislation from focusing solely on organizations and employers in partnership with the government to encompassing a much broader realm of protection against discrimination. Recognizing that societal change would take time, passage of the ADA was quickly acknowledged by Jones (1991) as being the most significant piece of social legislation since the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The makeup of the ADA was divided into five titles that addressed different areas of potential discriminatory actions by organizations and individuals:

- Title I: employee discrimination;
- Title II: discrimination in public services;
- Title III: public accommodations;
- Title IV: telecommunications;
- Title V: miscellaneous provisions (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990).

This study focused on Title III of the ADA that addressed potential discrimination with regard to public accommodations. More specifically, the ADA stated that:

> No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation. (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990, § 12182)

The ADA defined a place of public accommodation as "a facility operated by a private entity whose operations affect commerce" (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, § 36.104). The ADA defined 12 categories for places of public accommodation. Among the categories were facilities such as hotels, restaurants, theaters, and public and private venues. This study included the category of "gymnasiums, health spas, bowling alleys, golf courses, or other places of exercise or recreation" (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, § 36.104; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990; Mayer & Scammon, 1995). Applying the ADA's definition of places of public accommodation, a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site is protected by the legislation's definition of gymnasiums, health spas, and other places of exercise or recreation. By leaving the categories so broad and not defining other places of exercise or

recreation, it provided legislators with flexibility to include a number of existing or new facilities that may not be directly addressed in the act's wording. Therefore, a training site for elite athletes may not be specifically addressed by the ADA, it was covered through the vague language provided in the 12 categories of places of public accommodation.

Discrimination at places of public accommodation may take on multiple forms. The ADA attempted to address the different forms of discrimination that one may face from a place of public accommodation. Under the ADA, operators of public accommodations were prohibited from discriminating by:

- denying the chance to participate in or benefit from an opportunity;
- affording an opportunity that was not equal to that made available to other individuals;
- providing access that was different or separate, unless such separation or difference was necessary to provide an individual with a disability an opportunity that was as effective as that provided to others;
- providing opportunities that were not in the most integrated setting appropriate to meet the needs of an individual;
- using direct or contractually arranged standards or methods of administration that resulted in discrimination or that encouraged others subject to common administrative control to discriminate; or
- excluding or denying an individual equal treatment because of that person's association or relationship with a person who had a disability (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990; Burgdorf, 1991).

The ADA was signed into law in 1990 and instituted regulations on both existing facilities and those that would be constructed thereafter. For new builds, regulation was a matter of the design and construction teams becoming knowledgeable of stipulations included in the law. The ADA made clear that "failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities" was discrimination unless those modifications fundamentally altered what was offered (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990, § 12182). Existing structures, however, were addressed in the legislation with acknowledgement that not all public facilities could be expected to structurally adjust to comply with ADA standards.

The ADA (1990) addressed existing facilities in Section 36.304 with regard to removal of barriers. Generally, the ADA (1990) stated that an existing place of public accommodation was subject to discrimination claims if it failed to remove architectural barriers when those changes were "readily achievable" (§ 12182). The legislation further explained that readily achievable meant "easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense" (§ 12181). The ADA placed no price tag on what was or was not achievable, but rather listed four factors to be considered: (a) the nature and cost, (b) financial and operational resources of the facilities and the potential impact involved, (c) financial resources and size of the business involved, and (d) type of operation and structure of the facility (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990). Therefore, facilities were evaluated on ADA compliance individually, or on a case-by-case basis.

Physical barriers were among the multiple factors as to why people with disabilities faced social isolation, and may include lack of appropriate accessible parking, entrances, or general access to amenities within a facility (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989). These physical barriers often contributed to the struggle individuals with disabilities faced with establishing social relationships, which led to social isolation (Bramston et al., 2002; Coleman, 1971; Faris, 1934; Louis Harris & Associates, 1986; Rimmer et al., 2007). Therefore, the importance of facility design was not only central to physical access but to the psychological well-being of people with disabilities.

Facility Design

Environmental attributes include a consumer's perceptions of facilities and surroundings, which may shape satisfaction levels due to the amount of time a consumer spends in that environment (Bitner, 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Wakefield, Blodgett, & Sloan, 1996). Physical barriers such as facility inaccessibility are environmental attributes that often deter people with physical disabilities from full participation in society (McClain, Medrano, Marcum, & Schukar, 2000). Once the ADA was signed into law, early ADA-related lawsuits regarding discrimination focused on facility design and the architect and design teams that constructed facilities (Mazumdar & Geis, 2003). As facilities began to adapt to ADA regulations, case law shifted focus from existing barriers such as seating locations at events (Mayer & Scammon, 1995) to lines of sight from accessible seating within sport and entertainment arenas (Carlson, 1998; Conrad, 1998; *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects*, 1996). *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects* (1996) was the first major case related to ADA Title III for sports arenas as the Paralyzed Veterans of America sued the

architects of Washington, DC's MCI Center for failing to provide unobstructed lines of sight for accessible seating and failure to provide the required number of accessible seats in appropriate locations. ADA standards were followed by MCI Center designers, but the case hinged on sightlines, an issue not previously interpreted by the courts (Salmen, 2001). The court approved substantial compliance for the MCI Center, stating that the designers followed ADA regulations but that a revised design would be needed for compliance with an overwhelming majority (78%) of accessible seats having unobstructed lines of sight (*Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects*, 1996). This compromise set a standard of architects not meeting ADA regulations to the fullest extent, partly due to different interpretations of the ADA.

Interpretation of the ADA has been unclear at times, and the U.S. Department of Justice has not provided an interpretation of the law unless pressing legal matters exist (Salmen, 2001). The lack of a uniform interpretation left the door open to litigation. One option for organizations and facility designers to preemptively combat litigation was universal design. The Center for Universal Design (1997) defined the concept as the "design of products and environments usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design" (para. 1). Universal design was a term first used by Dr. Edward Steinfeld in 1997 as the act of accommodating the maximum number of people without specifically focusing on individuals' level of ability (Salmen, 2001). Facility managers have recognized universal design advantages, yet accessibility minimums continued to be the focus of many new builds (Saito, 2006). Whereas universal design encompassed the best design for all users, accessibility has mostly been aligned with ADA compliance within a specific regulation or criteria that established a minimum level of access (Saito, 2006; Salmen, 2001). Nonetheless, access for

people with disabilities can be enhanced when the issue is addressed at the design stage. Accessibility remains an issue of concern for people with disabilities, however, as facilities do not always meet regulations in all aspects or fail to differentiate between what is legally compliant versus what is fully accessible and practical for the stakeholders.

Accessibility to public space has been limited for people with disabilities who seek opportunities in social and recreational activities such as physical fitness and training (Rimmer et al., 2004). Common accessibility issues people faced have been identified as no curb cuts or ramps, blocked entranceways, inaccessible doors, insufficient accessible parking, and poor or obstructed travel surfaces (Meyers et al., 2002; Rimmer et al., 2004). More specifically and pertaining to the focus of this research, access to training facilities has been a barrier for people with disabilities and their desires for physical activity (Rimmer et al., 2004). Scholars have examined training facilities in the United States and found that a low percentage of them provided accessible workout or training space for people with disabilities (Cardinal & Spaziani, 2003; Nary et al., 2000). In a study conducted by Cardinal and Spaziani (2003) that examined 50 fitness and training facilities in Oregon, none of the sites was 100% compliant to ADA standards; 8% of exercise equipment were compliant; 37% of customer service desks were accessible; and 55% of drinking fountains were accessible. Therefore, a desire by a person with a disability to pursue exercise or training at a facility was thwarted due to the design and physical barriers of the facilities.

Rimmer et al. (2004) revealed 10 major categories of barriers and facilitators related to access and participation for people with disabilities. The authors provided a framework for evaluating the barriers that existed at a training facility and provided a foundation for this study's

exploration into facility accessibility. In each of the categories, the authors described barriers that existed within the category and provided potential ways to address the barriers. Four of the categories were related to this study of a facility for elite athletes with disabilities: Build and Natural Environment; Cost/Economic; Equipment; and Guidelines, Codes, Regulations, and Laws. Each of these categories will be explored with regard to facility accessibility.

Build and Natural Environment

The category of Build and Natural Environment related to aspects of the physical facility and access to and within it (Rimmer et al., 2004). Some of these barriers to the build and natural environment included a lack of curb cuts, inaccessible routes, narrow doorways, inaccessible desks or counters, and lack of elevators. In fitness and training facilities, people with disabilities have experienced challenges with access in multiple areas such as parking, dressing rooms and locker rooms, toilet and bathing rooms, swimming pools, and integration of equipment (Rimmer et al., 2004).

Dressing rooms and locker rooms. Accessible dressing rooms and locker rooms are essential for fitness and training facilities so people with disabilities can have the privacy and privilege to change clothes before and after using the facility (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010). The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010) set forth specific measurements for dressing and locker room amenities. For example, bench seats inside dressing and locker rooms must be the same height as a typical wheelchair seat, which is between 17-19 inches from the ground. Some bench seats may be lower than the requirement to accommodate for people of short stature or children (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, § 803). Bench seats must provide back support or be affixed to a wall to act as

back support. If back supports are affixed to the seats, they must be 42 inches long minimum and extend 2 inches maximum above the seat surface.

Turning space for wheelchairs must be taken into consideration in these locations, and measurements must comply with Section 304 of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010). Circular spaces must measure 60 inches in diameter, and T-shaped spaces must measure 60 inches square with a base of 36 inches at the arms of the space (§ 304.3). Door swings may be permitted to swing into turning spaces, but shall not be permitted to swing into a room unless ground space complies with the aforementioned criteria (§ 304.4; § 603.2.3).

Other dressing and locker room fixtures must adhere to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010) and include intricacies such as the height of coat hooks, shelves, and shower heads. Coat hooks and shelves must be between 40 inches minimum and 48 inches maximum above the floor surface (§ 213.3.7). For showers, at least one unit must provide shower sprays with a hose of 59 inches long that can be used as a fixed shower head and as a hand-held shower (§ 607.6).

Parking. The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010) mandated that parking spaces must comply with regulations based on the total number of spaces in a parking facility. The total number of accessible spaces is calculated for each parking facility, whether it is a surface lot or garage. So if an event uses multiple parking lots, accessible parking is not measured against the collection of parking facilities as a whole but rather lot-by-lot to prevent clustering. An exception to anti-clustering of accessible spaces is permissible if the spaces are placed together in one lot that permits greater accessibility in terms of distance, cost, and convenience (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010). These accessible spaces that

serve a specific building must be located on the shortest accessible route connecting the parking facility to the building's accessible entrance. Ensuring compliance, or going beyond compliance, is ideal for a training facility for elite athletes with disabilities (Rimmer et al., 2004).

Swimming pools. Swimming pools were addressed by the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010), and they were among the structural changes to comply with the ADA. Section 242 mandated at least two accessible entries be provided in swimming pools, and they may include lifts, sloped entries, transfer walls, a transfer system, or pool stairs. Each of the potential accessible entries has mandated measurements to ensure accessibility. However, the general rule of accessible entries is that swimming pools must provide an entranceway where an individual is capable of unassisted transfer from deck to water.

Toilet and bathing rooms. Toilet and bathing rooms, much like dressing rooms and locker rooms, are locations where wheelchair turning space and door swings are the focus of accessibility. Turning space must comply with Section 304 of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010), as previously described with regard to dressing rooms and locker rooms. Door swings are permitted to swing into turning space providing there is sufficient ground space for wheelchairs as outlined in the standards (603.2.3).

Integration. Integration of people with disabilities and able-bodied individuals within sport was a point of contention in the courts, although mostly with accessible seating and lines of sight (Carlson, 1998; Conrad, 1998; Mayer & Scammon, 1995; *Paralyzed Veterans of America v. Ellerbe Becket Architects*, 1996). Case law reinforced that accessible seating must be an integral part of the seating plan and not segregated (2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, 2010, §221). This topic is imperative for training facilities with regard to workout equipment

location. Facilities should not cluster machines that are accessible to people with disabilities into one section of the floor's layout, but rather integrate the design to incorporate accessible equipment throughout the facility.

Facilitators. Rimmer et al. (2004) offered suggestions for addressing barriers in training centers. The authors acknowledged that safety issues were a concern at training facilities, particularly with regard to slippery floors. They suggested providing non-slip mats in locker rooms, which may be among the more reasonable financial upgrades a facility can complete. Other facilitators for which the authors advocated, some of which were previously addressed, were adequate accessible parking, push-button operated doors, multi-level front desks, ramps to hot tubs and pools, and family changing rooms for parents to help children and for companions to help adults with disabilities (Rimmer et al., 2004).

Cost/Economic

Rimmer et al. (2004) listed financial constraints as a major category of barriers for facilities. The Cost/Economic category related to the "cost of participating in recreation and fitness activities or costs associated with making facilities accessible" (p. 421). Financials become a barrier because budgets are problematic at small facilities, particularly those that are not nationwide chains. Facility managers are concerned with bottom-line numbers, and retrofitting existing structures presents expense concerns for organizations. Additionally, adaptive equipment adds to budgets of organizations, and membership fees can be seen as barriers for people with disabilities. For example, Rimmer et al. (2004) explained that people with disabilities must pay the same membership fees as able-bodied individuals, although not all equipment or programs at the facility may be accessible.

An additional point of concern for facilities with regard to ADA regulations was they were not allowed to increase fees or charges to offset compliance costs for construction or refurbishing. The ADA (1990) stated:

> A public accommodation may not impose a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the costs of measures, such as the provision of auxiliary aids, barrier removal, alternatives to barrier removal, and reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, that are required to provide that individual or group with the nondiscriminatory treatment required by the Act or this part. (§ 36.301)

Facilitators to avoid financial barriers included proactive management by designing an accessible facility from the outset (Rimmer et al., 2004). Including accessibility upgrades and changes in an organization's annual budget and seeking grants to supplement the expenses may prevent reactionary management. The authors also suggested tax credits for facilities that update per ADA compliance, in addition to scholarships and sliding fees for people with disabilities who have low incomes.

Equipment

Accessibility of equipment was among the biggest reasons facilities were not accessible and therefore people with disabilities may have reservations about using the facilities (Cardinal & Spaziani, 2003; Nary et al., 2000). With regard to equipment barriers, three main areas emerged: not enough space between equipment; poor equipment maintenance; and a lack of adaptive or accessible equipment (Rimmer et al., 2004). Space between equipment should be addressed by facilities with the same nature as other spatial issues regarding the ADA, taking

proper access requirement measures into account. The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design set forth spatial requirements for wheelchairs as follows:

- A single wheelchair space must be 36 inches wide minimum.
- Adjacent wheelchair spaces must be 33 inches wide minimum.
- Front or rear entry wheelchair space shall be 48 inches deep minimum.
- Side entry wheelchair space shall be 60 inches deep minimum.
- Wheelchair spaces may not overlap circulation paths.
- Space may include knee and toe clearance. (§ 802)

It is important to note the aforementioned criteria must include knee and toe clearance for people who use wheelchairs. Considering the protrusion and awkward spatial lines of weight machines, knee and toe clearance become imperative with regard to equipment barriers at fitness and training facilities.

A lack of adaptive or accessible equipment links back to financial barriers. Still, Rimmer et al. (2004) suggested facilities invest in adaptive equipment such as pool water chairs, Velcro straps for better grip on equipment, upper-body aerobic equipment for people who use wheelchairs, and strength equipment that can be used by people from a wheelchair. The authors also suggested facilities should improve communication with people with disabilities regarding equipment purchase or feedback about the existing state of a facility. For example, including any members with disabilities in the purchase process of equipment for the facility may give insight to the staff on concerns for those individuals.

Guidelines, Codes, Regulations, and Laws

Rimmer et al. (2004) referenced guidelines, codes, regulations, and laws as potential barriers for facilities due to the "issues related to the use and interpretation of laws and regulations concerning accessibility of information, particularly building codes and the ADA" (p. 421). The guidelines set forth by the ADA, critics have argued, stifle the creativity and design skill of architects. While availability exists to move beyond ADA requirements and increase accessibility through design, architects have been hesitant to do so because they wanted to stick directly with regulations (Rimmer et al., 2004). The authors, however, suggested that legal action is needed to enforce the ADA, although facility managers can alleviate such issues by educating themselves and their staff on accessibility requirements.

Trained and Educated Staff

Structural concerns receive much attention with regard to accessibility, and the ADA established criteria for measurements that facilities must follow to prevent discrimination against people with disabilities. Yet, nonstructural issues such as the functional attribute of service quality continue to play a part in discrimination. The functional attribute of service quality is the consumer's evaluation of how a service is delivered (Hardin, 2009). This section addresses how facilities such as training centers used by elite athletes with disabilities must ensure their staff members are educated on the ADA and trained in assisting people with disabilities. Facility staff members must be knowledgeable of how to train elite athletes with disabilities as well as people with disabilities who want to exercise, remembering the importance of safety as well as ensuring positive effects of physical training. Additionally, facilities that provide accessible fitness

equipment and programs also may be open for public use, and staff must be flexible to cater to those needs as well as training people with disabilities.

The list of barriers provided by Rimmer et al. (2004) extended into barriers beyond the physical and into the intangible with categories of Information; Emotional/Psychological; Knowledge, Education, and Training; Perceptions and Attitudes; Policies and Procedures; and Resource Availability. These categories assist in addressing how a facility must train and educate staff on the barriers created for people with disabilities.

Information/Knowledge, Education, and Training

Fitness professionals have noted that facility personnel such as personal trainers are not knowledgeable about disabilities, do not understand rationale behind the ADA, and are not knowledgeable of how to adapt existing programs and equipment to make them more accessible (Rimmer et al., 2004). Rimmer et al. (2004) offered two categories—Information and Knowledge, Education, and Training—that were combined in this study due to their likeness. Consumers reiterated that lack of information and knowledge, noting that front-line employees were not knowledgeable about programs and services that may be offered to people with disabilities. In response to this gap in knowledge, facility administrators must address both verbal and non-verbal barriers that may exist. The non-verbal barriers include access of information within the facilities such as signs and brochures, and ensuring that accessibility options such as Braille and alternative means of communication are included. Rimmer et al. (2004) offered facilitators to combat barriers with regard to information, including administrative support from facilities to ensure staff training and education among facility employees is

achieved. The authors also suggested that management should support continued education through seminars and workshops by providing release time for employees.

Emotional/Psychological

Rimmer et al. (2004) noted that emotional and psychological barriers to participation existed in fitness and training activities. While physical barriers can be tangible to those they affect, the most frequently cited reason people with disabilities do not use fitness and training facilities was the perception that the locations were unfriendly environments (Rimmer et al., 2004). Perceptions of inaccessible environments shape feelings of people with disabilities. In fact, negative attitudes and behaviors of people with disabilities have resulted in feelings of self-consciousness (Rimmer et al., 2004). These negative attitudes included "fear of the unknown, concerns about needing and requesting assistance, and lack of support from friends and family to access and participate in fitness and training facilities or programs" (p. 423).

Facilitators to address emotional and psychological barriers as suggested by the authors were to make facilities friendlier (Rimmer et al., 2004). Professionals at fitness and training facilities need to present themselves as more consumer friendly and motivated to help consumers with disabilities. Relating to the authors' previous suggestions, a friendly environment may result from an educated and trained staff. Alternative means of offering a friendly environment may be to provide trial membership and temporary passes to people with disabilities (Rimmer et al., 2004). Many fitness and training facilities are not fully accessible (Cardinal & Spaziani, 2003; Nary et al., 2000). Therefore, offering trial memberships or sliding membership fees, as previously discussed in the Cost section, may allow people with disabilities to determine their

comfort level within a facility as well as what they can physically do with the equipment in a facility.

Perceptions and Attitudes

This category addressed the barriers of perceptions and attitudes of both professionals and non-disabled individuals toward accessibility. Rimmer et al. (2004) argued that professionals often view accessibility legislation such as the ADA as necessary but may not understand why or how it should affect training facilities and activities. In some cases, accessibility may not be addressed or improved due to fears of liability (Rimmer et al., 2004). The authors suggested those professionals may not want to include people with disabilities for a multitude of reasons, ranging from liability concerns to staff laziness and negative attitudes (Rimmer et al., 2004).

Rimmer et al. (2004) argued that excluding people with disabilities may severely damage business and revenue. Consumers with disabilities may bring a companion for assistance, who may participate in workouts as well. Again, this category leads back to informing and educating staff about disabilities and the means to train those individuals at fitness and training facilities. Rimmer et al. (2004) suggested greater awareness and sensitivity toward people with disabilities may be achieved by having staff use wheelchairs, crutches, and other assistive devices as well as introduce them to people with disabilities. Bringing staff closer to the experiences of people with disabilities may shape perceptions and attitudes due to increased education.

Policies and Procedures

Rimmer et al. (2004) acknowledged that facilities lack in implementation of policies and procedures, and this presents a barrier for people with disabilities due to insufficient rules and regulations. As other categories have addressed, the insufficient attention given to policies and

procedures may come from insufficient designated staff responsible for accessibility or their knowledge of the issue. Another issue faced by people with disabilities with regard to policies and procedures is that facilities often fail to review and implement their own policies. For example, facilities often do not provide sufficient time for people with disabilities to use facilities in opportunities such as open swim periods, with regard to policies against service animals, or by not allowing companions to assist individuals for free if they are not using the equipment or programming (Rimmer et al., 2004). The authors suggested that facilities make practice of reviewing and updating their policies with regard to accessibility and prorating membership fees for new members, again pointing to trial memberships or sliding membership fees.

Resource Availability

The category on resource availability referred to what Rimmer et al. (2004) described as resources which allow people with disabilities to participate in fitness and training activities such as using adaptive equipment at a facility. The authors acknowledged there is a lack of adaptive equipment at facilities, in addition to proper facility staffing with employees who may be able to assist people with disabilities. In rural areas, training facilities may have few programs geared toward people with disabilities and their desires to be physically active. To address these issues, the authors suggested that rural communities, where limited resources may be available, should pool resources to provide accessible facilities and programs (Rimmer et al., 2004). For example, facilities in rural areas may be able to work together to provide an adaptive swimming course for people with disabilities by combining services and offering them to members at both facilities. The authors also recognized that staff knowledge about disability may be limited, but that

facilities may be able to develop partnerships with student interns or volunteers with trained expertise in adapted physical education or therapeutic recreation. Making these connections may alleviate potential funding issues related to hiring more staff while also providing volunteers and student interns with essential experiential learning.

These categories and suggestions set forth by Rimmer et al. (2004) provided a foundation for this study's examination of the accessible facility at Lakeshore Foundation. Central to the discussion on facilities were the ADA and the categories of barriers presented by Rimmer et al. (2004). Now the discussion shifts to a review of the sociological, historical, and ethnographic scholarship on sport for people with disabilities.

Open and Closed Systems in Sport and Recreation

A system can be defined as "an ongoing process that transforms certain specified inputs into outputs" which "influence subsequent inputs into the system in a way that supports the continuing operation of the process" (Rainey, 2009, p. 26). For this research, Lakeshore Foundation was identified as the system under study. Systems theory was one approach to studying sport and recreation organizations like Lakeshore Foundation considering their complexity. The theory of general systems originated in 1928 with Ludwig von Bertalanffy arguing that everything in nature is interrelated and part of a larger system that is affected by what happens within and outside of that system (Covell, Walker, Siciliano, & Hess, 2007). The concept was later applied to organizations by Herbert Simon (1965) in the 1960s as he viewed organizations as "systems that make decisions and process information" (p. 35).

The general systems paradigm was once considered "vital to the study of social organizations as providing the major new paradigm" for studying organizations (Kast &

Rosenzweig, 1972, p. 457). Although the systems approach never fully developed as predicted, systems theory still provides a framework for examining sport and recreation organizations particularly in regard to the differences of open and closed systems. A system is viewed as closed if "no material enters of leaves it" (von Bertalanffy, 1950, p. 23). Closed systems are "unaffected by their environments" to where the only influences on the system occur within the system itself (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 608). Boulding (1956) identified nine levels of systems, of which Level 1 and Level 2 align with closed systems. Level 1 on Boulding's (1956) hierarchy presented a static structure of frameworks, while Level 2 was a simple dynamic system with predetermined motions in clockwork manner. As closed systems, these levels represented operations with assembly-line qualities where tasks were routinely conducted.

Organizations were traditionally viewed as closed systems, insulated from the surrounding environment and protected from happenings outside of their boundaries (Covell et al., 2007). During the industrialization of the United States, it was natural to understand why organizations were viewed as closed systems. Factories were stable and machinelike and operated in a programmed pattern, characteristics of a closed system where "internal processes remain the same regardless of environmental changes" (Rainey, 2009, p. 26). However, as the United States shifted toward a service industry, there also began a shift in the 1960s and 1970s toward analysis of organizations as open systems that needed to adapt to their environments (Rainey, 2009).

> Theories and expert opinion have moved away from emphasis on highly bureaucratized organizations with strong chains of command, very specific and unchanging job responsibilities, and strong controls over the people in them, and toward more flexible, 'organic' organizations, horizontal communications, and a virtual crescendo of calls for participation, empowerment, teamwork, and other versions of more decentralized, adaptive organizations. (Rainey, 2009, p. 25)

The shift to emphasize flexible organizations reflected a shift in analyzing organizations influenced by factors from their surrounding environment, or open systems.

Open systems "interact with their environments" and can have influence from factors outside of the system (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 608). Based on Boulding's (1956) hierarchy of systems, open systems operate on Level 3 as a control mechanism such as a thermostat that reacts to the environment's temperature, or Level 4 as a self-maintaining structure (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). The shift toward recognizing organizations as open systems was a major contribution to studying organizations overall (Covell et al., 2007). Rather than focus on the operations of an organization, examination of organizations as open systems includes external influences and environmental factors that may affect those operations. In regards to open systems, organizations receive input from their environment, transform that input into output, and the output re-enters the environment and results in feedback that affects the system based on the environment around it (Covell et al., 2007; Rainey, 2009; von Bertalanffy, 1950). Identifying and mapping this repeated cycle of input, transformation, output, and affected input is the critical component of the open system approach (Katz & Kahn, 1966). During this cycle, a system is able to survive only if input is greater than the energy expended in transformation and output

(Katz & Kahn, 1966). In simple business terms, an organization must take in more than it puts out. Balance is achieved due to the feedback provided as it enables the system to correct for the changes in the environment. Therefore, open systems focus on effectiveness rather than efficiency (Melao & Pidd, 2000).

Katz and Kahn (1966) identified a list of nine properties of open systems, emphasized by input, throughput, and output. Culminating the properties of open systems is the concept of equifinality, where a system can reach the same final state through a variety of paths (Ashmos & Huber, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Equifinality will be addressed later in this study in greater detail, but the concept is critical in relating training facilities to open systems and system theory. Covell et al. (2007) argued that "successful sport organizations know they are open systems" in that the environments are a key factor in affecting the organization's performance (p. 36). Consumer tastes and preferences drive an organization's services and products, and therefore the organization must maintain a working staff capable of meeting consumer desires. Covell et al. (2007) illustrated the attention paid to consumers as exercise facilities employing certified physical trainers capable of teaching power yoga, and food vendors in sport stadiums partnering with suppliers of affordable, high-quality hot dogs. Similarly and as recommended by Rimmer et al. (2004), Lakeshore Foundation must employ trained personnel to assist people with disabilities for fitness, recreation, athletic, and education programs offered to children and adults with disabilities (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.b). A subsystem of Lakeshore Foundation is its recognition as an accessible facility that is a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. Due to the distinction, Lakeshore hosts elite athletes with disabilities as they train in preparation to compete in the Paralympic Games. Just three designated Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites

existed in the United States as of 2012, so limited alternatives impacted the success of Lakeshore Foundation. Therefore, Lakeshore Foundation's training facilities and equipment are fully accessible and prepared to accommodate recreational users as well as elite athletes of all ages and abilities. Lakeshore Foundation, partly due to its targeted audience of people with disabilities, is an open system as it receives input from its environment of stakeholders comprised of consumers with special needs for equipment, training, accessibility, and programming. Consumers with disabilities have different needs. As noted previously, scholars, practitioners, and government agencies have different definitions of disability, which reinforces that the individual is an open system and affects other systems in different ways (Rainey, 2009; Rothstein, Martinez, & McKinney, 2002; Smart & Smart, 1997; Zola, 1993). Therefore, the environment surrounding Lakeshore Foundation and the services it offers affects how the organization operates.

The systems view forces organizations to recognize that what is happening outside its boundaries matters and can shape the organization itself (Rainey, 2009). Covell et al. (2007) argued that no organization can ignore environmental influences and simply concern itself with what happens within. Rather, organizations must be "concerned equally with customer, community, employee, supplier, and government relations" (p. 36). Anything that happens to one of the stakeholders or the environment around the system also affects the organization. With Lakeshore dependent upon its reputation as a training facility for all abilities and specifically for elite athletes, any environmental change must be recognized as an influential factor on business.

Subsystems of Lakeshore Foundation

A business process for an organization can be defined as "a set of subsystems: people, tasks, structure, technology, etc., which interact with each other (internal relationships) and with their environment (external relationships) in order to fulfill" an objective (Melao & Pidd, 2000, p. 115). Ashmos and Huber (1987) identified 19 categories for subsystems, detailing their function and providing examples of a department that might be classified as that particular subsystem. The authors divided the subsystem classification into three parts: systems that process information only; systems that process matter-energy only (e.g., product); and systems that process both information and matter-energy (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). Lakeshore Foundation operates with eight departments in its organizational structure that can be classified as structural subsystems: Accounting, Administration, Aquatics & Fitness, Communications & Membership, Development, Human Resources, Recreation & Athletics, and Research & Education (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.a).

The Administration subsystem at Lakeshore Foundation is comprised of eight individuals who operate on a multitude of administrative levels within the organization, from president to maintenance technician. This subsystem can be classified as Decider in Ashmos and Huber's (1987) structure. A Decider "receives information inputs from all other subsystems and transmits information outputs that control the entire system" (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 612). Examples of a Decider are a board of directors or an executive. Included in Lakeshore Foundation's Administration subsystem are the president, chief financial officer and director of administration, coordinator of special projects, and accounting coordinator, all of whom have the autonomy to make decisions that affect others' work within the organization.

An Associator "carries out the first stage of the learning process, forming associations among items of information" with examples being an intelligence analyst or chief executive officer (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 612). In the role of Associator at Lakeshore Foundation are employees in Aquatics & Fitness as well as Recreation & Athletics. Within these departments are program specialists, program coordinators, and the director of aquatics. These employees are examples of individuals who receive information from other workers and clients, then transmit that information into outputs that control their programming.

Research conducted on Lakeshore's athletes and teams aligned with Ashmos and Huber's (1987) subsystem of Input Transducer, which receives information from a system's environment. Lakeshore's Research & Education department "performs applied research examining the effectiveness of physical activity programs in promoting health and quality of life, improving functional independence, and preventing secondary conditions in people with physical disabilities" (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.e, para. 1). Part of the department's mission is to work directly with "athletes and teams with the goal of enhanced technique and improved performance" (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.e, para. 1). Lakeshore Foundation had one full-time employee listed in the department at the time of this study, the Director of Research & Education, although research assistants as well as athletes and teams under study make up the subsystem.

Also included in the interpretation echelon of Ashmos and Huber's (1987) classification is Encoder, who "alters the code of information input from subsystems, changing 'private' code to 'public' that can be interpreted by environmental components" (p. 613). Examples of such would be employees in advertising or public relations. At Lakeshore, the Communications &

Membership department and the Development department are classified as Encoders. Within these departments are associate directors and coordinators in their respective fields, who interpret information input to make use of it either through promotion of the organization, dissemination of information to stakeholders, or fostering relationships with stakeholders such as members and donors.

Accounting and Human Resources are two administrative departments at Lakeshore Foundation that serve as subsystems beyond the public realm of the organization. Accounting is classified as Internal Transducer, a subsystem that receives information from other subsystems about alterations in their status (Ashmos & Huber, 1987). Human Resources is classified as Boundary, a subsystem that is located at the perimeter of the system and holds components together, protects, and permits entry into the system (Ashmos & Huber, 1987).

In addition to the subsystems of employees at Lakeshore Foundation are those subsystems that include external stakeholders such as elite athletes and teams, recreational clients, and investors (e.g., donors and sponsors). Whereas the subsystems of employees interact within Lakeshore Foundation, these subsystems are separate from the organization but act as stakeholders because of their use and support of the organization and its facilities. Elite athletes and teams and other recreational clients fulfill the objective of Lakeshore Foundation's existence as they are the population Lakeshore serves, whereas donors and sponsors are among the extended population the organization depends upon for operation. These relationships help fulfill the purpose of Lakeshore Foundation, which is to promote "independence for persons with physically disabling conditions" and provide "opportunities to pursue active, healthy lifestyles"

(Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.g, para. 1). The means by which Lakeshore achieves that purpose may be different depending upon the individual stakeholder.

Equifinality and Multifinality

Equifinality is when systems can reach the same final state and have similar organizational effectiveness despite taking different paths to develop that initiative (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Equifinality is defined by von Bertalanffy (1950) as the process by which a "final state may be reached from different initial conditions in different ways" (p. 25). More recent definitions are simpler in which there is more than one developmental trajectory to reach a common outcome (Edwards, Mumford, & Serra-Roldan, 2007; Glaser, 2000). Conversely, multifinality is defined as the process in which multiple outcomes can occur from similar beginning conditions or causal variables (Edwards et al., 2007). Therefore, different findings may come of one condition (Glaser, 2000; King, Abrams, & Dowling, 2009). Historically, it has been argued that closed systems cannot behave equifinally or multifinally considering the effects of variables on the final state (von Bertalanffy, 1950).

As previously discussed, Lakeshore must operate as an open system due to the diverse necessities of its stakeholders. The organization employs personnel to assist people with ranging physical disabilities to exercise recreationally and train in their respective sports, and therefore must be flexible in approaches to reach a specific goal for those individuals. Equifinality occurs at Lakeshore in the training of elite athletes who have different disabilities and capabilities. Two individuals may have spinal cord injuries that appear similar in diagnosis, yet those individuals also may have vastly different experiences in attempting to play wheelchair basketball. Just as in all athletics, each individual has different levels of ability and talent, and individuals with

disabilities are no different. A Lakeshore aquatics specialist may be able to train two individuals with cerebral palsy how to competitively swim, although one individual may require greater attention and specialization with their instruction due to physical limitations not present in the second individual. Therefore, the aquatics specialist must instruct in an equifinal manner to reach similar outcomes for the two individuals.

Multifinality may occur at Lakeshore in individual training or team training of elite athletes, as well as recreational pursuits of stakeholders. Part of this study is on elite athletes, and one example of multifinality is when teams conduct training camps at Lakeshore Foundation. Even at the elite competition level of the U.S. Paralympic Team, athletes progress differently and may show different outcomes from their training despite enduring identical training regimens. A U.S. Sailing Team training camp, for example, may be of greater benefit to one sailor than a second sailor, and therefore present the coaches with multifinality where the same procedures were directed for all athletes but resulted in varying degrees of progress due to environmental influences for the athletes.

Environmental Influences and Systems

A systems approach to analyzing complex organizations recognizes influences outside its boundaries (Rainey, 2009). Covell et al. (2007) stated that environmental influences cannot be ignored by organizations because they must always be concerned with actions and trends of stakeholders. Early theorists recognized the impact environments have on organizations, noting that prosperity depends on market knowledge and competitor strength (Ashmos & Huber, 1987; Fayol, 1949). In fact, adapting flexible structures is a central theme in organization theory and

management practice (Daft, 2010; Donaldson, 2001; Peters, 1987; Rainey, 2009; Scott & Davis, 2006).

Flexibility results in organizations adapting to their environments, mostly because of a desire for more or better resources, acquiring new stakeholders, or preserving existing stakeholder relationships (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Rainey, 2009). An organization's environmental influences, however, are not limited only to outside stakeholders. Researchers often consider only a few environments as influencing variables, many times overlooking "organizational culture, strategy, politics, and attributes of key members" (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 609). Identifying stakeholders and the multiple influential environments is critical in the study of a complex organization like Lakeshore Foundation.

Stakeholder Theory

A stakeholder can be defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose" (Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007, p. 6). Freeman, Wicks, and Parmar (2004) posed the question of how management wants to do business, specifically in regard to the relationships needed to create with stakeholders in order to fulfill their purpose. Those stakeholders are critical to the success of an organization when they are satisfied over time (Freeman et al., 2007). Satisfying stakeholders, therefore, becomes one of the many primary foci of the organization, and Freeman et al. (2007) outlined 10 guiding principles when managing stakeholders. Six of the principles were applicable to this research:

1. Everything that is done serves stakeholders. Never trade off the interest of one versus the other continuously over time.
2. Act with purpose that fulfills our commitment to stakeholders. Act with aspiration towards fulfilling our dreams and theirs.
3. Intensive communication and dialogue is needed with stakeholders—not just those that are friendly.
4. Stakeholders consist of real people with names, faces, and children. They are complex.
5. Engage with both primary and secondary stakeholders.
6. Consistently monitor and redesign processes to make them better serve the stakeholders. (Freeman et al., 2007, pp. 52-60)

Among the guiding principles is the task of engaging with primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those that the organization depends upon for survival, such as investors, employees, consumers, competitors, and suppliers (Clarkson, 1995; Madsen & Ulhoi, 2001). Secondary stakeholders are those that influence or are influenced by the organization but are not essential to its survival, such as the local community, government, and media (Clarkson, 1995; Madsen & Ulhoi, 2001). This study focuses solely on primary stakeholders.

At Lakeshore Foundation, primary stakeholders are donors and sponsors who assist in the funding of the organization and its facilities, administrative employees who represent the organization and work directly with clients and donors, and athletic training employees who provide services to athletes and teams seeking elite athletic training. Athletes and teams as well as recreational athletes and individuals who use Lakeshore's facilities also are primary

stakeholders due to their consumption of services provided by the organization. Lakeshore Foundation's primary stakeholders can be divided into internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those who manage the organization such as administrative employees, athletic coordinators, and specialists who "play a significant role in the adoption of environmental operational practice" (Sarkis, Gonzalez-Torre, & Adenso-Diaz, 2010, p. 164). External stakeholders are those who act as clients to the organization such as athletes, non-athletes who exercise at the facilities, and donors and sponsors, all of whom do not have control of organizational resources but have the capacity to regulate public opinion of the organization (Sarkis et al., 2010).

Freeman et al. (2007) placed emphasis on engaging those stakeholders and consistently evaluating the best ways to serve them because they impact the work of Lakeshore Foundation. External stakeholders contribute resources to operate and create demand for programming, while the internal stakeholders manage those resources and offer supply of services for consumer demand, all of which fulfills the purpose of the organization.

Good to Great **Principles**

Collins (2001) put forth a plan for organizations to progress from average to great in various sectors of business. For Lakeshore Foundation to be great at its purpose of promoting independence, physical activity, and healthy lifestyles for people with disabilities, three tenets from Collins' (2001) research may be applied: the Hedgehog Concept, Confronting the Brutal Facts, and a Culture of Discipline.

Hedgehog Concept

As organizations move from good to great, they progress along a flywheel and reach what Collins (2001) labeled the Hedgehog Concept. The Hedgehog Concept is a principle of cutting away multiple pursuits into a "single, organizing idea, a basic principle or concept that unifies and guides everything" (Collins, 2001, p. 91). Oftentimes, organizations may pursue multiple ends simultaneously, resulting in a complex business model that leaves greatness unattainable for any one pursuit. Simplifying pursuits into one manageable focus sends anything not related to the focus into irrelevancy (Collins, 2001). Organizations that implement the Hedgehog Concept reach a turning point from buildup to breakthrough that includes confronting brutal facts of reality and maintaining focus on what the organization does well. That section of the flywheel is when an organization must have disciplined thought to recognize its successes as well as its failures to proceed on the upward track (Collins, 2001). Part of trimming away the unnecessary pursuits is an "understanding of what you can be the best at" (Collins, 2001, p. 98). If an organization deems it cannot become the best at its core business, then the core business cannot be the basis of its Hedgehog Concept (Collins, 2001).

Collins (2001) illustrated the Hedgehog Concept as being at the intersection of three circles that address the following questions:

1. *What can you be the best in the world at (and what can you not be the best at)?* Identifying this sets the focus and trims away other pursuits that are of no relevance to obtaining success.
2. *What drives your economic engine?* The critical component of this circle is determining a denominator, or profitability per something. Collins (2001) used the example of

Walgreens focusing on profit per customer visit rather than per store. Offering high-quality products or services and convenience brought customers back for more visits, and in turn resulted in greater profit. Identifying what brings the greatest profit should not be confused with identifying what the organization desires to bring the greatest profit.

3. *What are you deeply passionate about?* Good to great companies trimmed away excess pursuits and maintained focus only on those things the employees could be passionate about. As an example, Philip Morris maintained its focused production of cigarettes during the U.S. Federal Drug Administration's tightening of tobacco advertisement and marketing because the company's employees were passionate about their product (Collins, 2001). The company had great success while other tobacco organizations struggled after diversifying their focus and losing passion.

For an organization to have a "fully developed Hedgehog Concept, you need all three circles" (Collins, 2001, p. 97). If an organization can identify how it can be the best in the world, be financially stable to do it, and be passionate about it, the organization can continue its movement from good to great.

For Lakeshore Foundation, those three tenets were essential for maintaining a successful organization where elite athletes train. Lakeshore identified how it could be the best in the world by ensuring its athletic facilities were accessible to people with disabilities, making it the only training center of its kind in the Southeastern United States (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.b), as well as obtaining the first designation of U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, one of only three in the United States. Driving the economic engine were investments, rental property, donations, and memberships from individuals with disabilities seeking to exercise recreationally.

Lakeshore Foundation targeted a niche market of stakeholders as clients, but offered a service of accessibility that few others do. Finally, the internal and external stakeholders were passionate about their work. Consumers at Lakeshore used the training facility, particularly the elite athletes who used it for Paralympic training, because of their passion for healthy, active, and independent lifestyles as people with disabilities. Additionally, the employees at Lakeshore Foundation such as the front-line employees who provided service to athletes and teams seeking elite athletic preparation exhibited a passion toward healthy and active lifestyles but also toward helping people with physical disabilities live those lifestyles.

Essential to becoming the best and obtaining passion is having the right people in the organization. Having the right people is the hinge to excelling as an organization because they will be self-motivated rather than depending solely on the organization to motivate them (Collins, 2001). Using those right people to trim away excess pursuits and implement the Hedgehog Concept is a process that includes getting those people engaged within the organization (Collins, 2001). Collins (2001) suggested forming a group of invested and passionate individuals into what he called The Council, “a group of the right people who participate in dialogue and debate guided by the three circles, iteratively and over time, about vital issues and decisions facing the organization” (p. 115). The Council, Collins argued, can be guided by questions formed from the three circles of excellence, economics, and passion. It also can infuse the organization with brutal facts that result in trimming away excess pursuits while guiding it toward being great.

Confronting the Brutal Facts

Organizations must address their failures and shortcomings before obtaining true success (Collins, 2001). Confronting the Brutal Facts is a stage in success at which organizations initially form disciplined thought toward making a series of good decisions (Collins, 2001). Collins (2001) argued that too often this step is overlooked. Instead, employees and stakeholders fear administration and management rather than roadblocks that may prohibit the organization from success (Collins, 2001). However, identification of those roadblocks is critical for an organization to improve.

Collins (2001) offered four practices for organizations to create a climate where the truth is heard. These four practices are detailed below in relation to Lakeshore Foundation.

1. *Lead with questions, not answers.* If the right people are in the organization, great managers—or Level Five Leaders, as Collins termed them—ask those employees questions with a Socratic leadership style rather than directing orders. The leaders seek to capitalize on the knowledge of their employees. With regard to Lakeshore Foundation, administration must rely on employees' knowledge due to the intimate relationships with stakeholders. For example, athletic trainers often develop a bond with clients due to prolonged one-on-one contact that is absent from upper management. Those front-line employees must make decisions based on a stakeholder's needs and have the comfort that management trusts their knowledge and respects suggestions or answers to questions they may provide.
2. *Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion.* The Socratic style of leadership will naturally result in debate, discussion, and solutions as opposed to orders from the

administration. This style seeks to capture diverse opinions and keep an organization within the Hedgehog Concept. As discussed previously regarding employees at Lakeshore and the need for them to have the ability to approach management with suggestions, ongoing dialogue and debate opens the communication lines for these employees to improve organizational approaches as well as athletic training for stakeholders. Front-line employees like athletic trainers and specialists must have input on programming decisions because of their relationship with the stakeholders.

3. *Conduct autopsies without blame.* The author suggested creating a climate where the truth is heard and failures are accepted as fact without directing blame at any department or stakeholder. Discovery of failures may result in the question of whom or what caused it, but Collins argued that is meaningless. The focus should be on correction of the mistake regardless of fault. At Lakeshore, conducting autopsies without blame maintains the focus of business on the external stakeholders—helping people with disabilities live healthy, active, and independent lives. Pointing blame at employees or departments for failures shifts the focus from the service delivered or how to improve that service and places it on the employees.
4. *Build red flag mechanisms.* Collins suggested implementing real-time feedback to correct shortcomings of the organization. In an organization such as Lakeshore Foundation, real-time feedback can be obtained at all levels of service including providing accessible facilities to membership, serving recreational clients, and serving elite athletes with disabilities. Implementation of an evaluation system for stakeholders can provide Lakeshore Foundation with a low-budget mechanism of determining red flags in their

services. Evaluations of staff, services offered, and facilities can be conducted regularly for membership or offered through on-site kiosks to field immediate concerns. For recreational clients, evaluation mechanisms can be built into the client's programming. For elite athletes and teams, one-on-one meetings can assist in providing direct feedback and specific ways in which the employees can better cater to those athletes.

Confronting the brutal facts "leaves organizations stronger and more resilient, not weaker and more dispirited" (Collins, 2001, p. 81). This is particularly true when the right people are involved in the organization because those self-motivated individuals will be challenged to move their careers and the organization forward by facing the truth. Denying or ignoring these brutal facts acts just the opposite, de-motivating stakeholders because of false hopes that never come true.

Collins (2001) called this unwavering faith to prevail despite the brutal facts the Stockdale Paradox, named after a Vietnam War veteran who survived as a prisoner of war. Amid a gloomy outlook, Admiral Jim Stockdale maintained his focus yet did not set himself false hope with uncertain and unattainable goals. Collins (2001) related Stockdale's experience to how organizations can be successful through retaining "faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties and at the same time confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be" (p. 86). Put simply, organizations must confront brutal facts, maintain faith in success, and strip away "noise and clutter and just focus on the few things that would have the greatest impact" (Collins, 2001, p. 87). Focus such as this will maintain the organization and its stakeholders on a straight and narrow vision, which for Lakeshore

Foundation is to provide people with disabilities with the opportunity to lead healthy, active, and independent lifestyles.

Culture of Discipline

An organization with aspirations to move from good to great must instill a culture of discipline, which enacts the Hedgehog Concept and confronts the brutal facts. A culture of discipline requires strict adherence to the Hedgehog Concept: anything the organization does that is beyond its narrowed focus is not acceptable (Collins, 2001). In Collins' (2001) study of organizations that moved from mediocrity to greatness, a common denominator of those comparison organizations that failed or remained stagnant was a lack of discipline to remain within the three circles of the Hedgehog Concept: be the best in the world, identify what drives the economic engine, and be passionate about the focus.

The order in which an organization incorporates discipline is of critical importance. Discipline within an organization begins with hiring disciplined people (Collins, 2001). Hiring self-disciplined employees prevents management from attempting to change their employees' behaviors and places accountability with the employees. In Collins' (2001) words, get the right people on the bus so they can be disciplined. Next, managers must instill disciplined thought within employees (Collins, 2001). Such disciplined thought will allow employees to confront the brutal facts of reality while retaining a faith that the organization can and will achieve greatness all while adhering to the Hedgehog Concept of focusing the pursuit (Collins, 2001). Self-disciplined employees will view a poor performance as a personal insult rather than a reflection of a dysfunctional organization. Lakeshore Foundation operates as an open system where stakeholders "interact with their environments" and have influence from outside the system

(Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 608). Within Lakeshore Foundation's system, employees have freedom and responsibility to make decisions that affect other stakeholders and the organization. This type of autonomy reflects that self-disciplined people were hired, they do not need direct management, and that the system (e.g., Lakeshore Foundation's services and facilities) is managed, not the people (Collins, 2001).

The final task of incorporating a culture of discipline is that management must instill disciplined action (Collins, 2001). This concept is reliant upon the previous two tenets. Without disciplined people, disciplined action cannot sustain. Without disciplined thought, disciplined action has no clear direction or purpose. Collins (2001) used the illustration of six-time Ironman triathlete Dave Scott and his preparation for the grueling endurance competitions. Scott was detailed in his preparation so much that he rinsed his cottage cheese before eating it to get the maximum amount of fat off the food. Despite no correlation that rinsing cottage cheese would benefit him nutritionally, Scott took the extra step for the mere possibility of achieving the best results. Collins (2001) used the example of Scott to show that organizations must do whatever it takes, such as rinsing cottage cheese, to be the best in the world at what they do. Disciplined action must be present at Lakeshore Foundation due to the population it serves. Training and exercise, whether at the recreational or elite level, is a disciplined act for people with disabilities depending on their level of ability and potential risks involved. Disciplined action is required of Lakeshore's employees, particularly athletic training staff, to ensure safety and progress.

An enduring culture of discipline must be established at the top level of administration. Collins (2001) referred to Level Five Leaders as those executives who build enduring greatness by blending humility with professional will. Level Five Leaders are able to build enduring

greatness through establishing a culture of discipline rather than personally disciplining the organization through force or intimidation (Collins, 2001). An organization with personal discipline loses that characteristic when it loses its leader, whereas an organization with a culture of discipline maintains that culture well beyond the tenure of the leader.

Establishment of a culture of discipline is not easy or quick to accomplish, although leaders are able to identify when such a culture has been established. Collins (2001) outlined six steps to knowing a culture of discipline has been achieved, which previously have been discussed: (a) get the right people on the bus; (b) confront the brutal facts of reality; (c) create a climate where the truth is heard; (d) establish a Council and work within the three circles; (e) frame all decisions in context of a Hedgehog Concept; and (f) act from understanding, not bravado (p. 141). Knowing how to do the right thing as a Level Five Leader does not guarantee that action will be taken. Once the right thing has been identified, the question becomes "do you have the discipline to do the right thing and, equally important, stop doing the wrong things?" (Collins, 2001, p. 141). Organizational leaders who can follow the six steps to establish a disciplined culture as well as identify and stop doing the wrong things will achieve greatness.

Collins (2001) suggested that leaders "build a culture full of people who take disciplined action within the three circles, fanatically consistent with the Hedgehog Concept" (pp. 123-124). In doing so, the organization builds a culture around the idea of freedom and responsibility within a framework. Collins (2001) went on to say organizations should fill that culture with self-disciplined people willing to go extra lengths (e.g., rinse their cottage cheese) to fulfill their responsibilities. At Lakeshore Foundation, employees, particularly those working closely with the training site, must have the autonomy to make decisions that best serve the stakeholder or

consumer with which he or she is working, yet operating within a designed framework of safety and protecting the organization overall. Finally, the organizational culture will display adherence with great consistency to the Hedgehog Concept and the intersection of the three circles while identifying and ceasing those extraneous pursuits outside of the focus. Lakeshore Foundation must display a strict focus on the external stakeholders, which are individuals with disabilities seeking a healthy, active, and independent lifestyle. The initial criticism of Lakeshore's organizational culture may be its width as it serves individuals with disabilities from the beginning recreational stages up to the elite athletes preparing for the Paralympic Games. Yet, combining the groups of individuals with such diverse abilities presents opportunities for elite athletes to become role models to the beginners. Additionally, the blended environment promotes diversity among its own culture, one which maintains a fight for diverse acceptance regularly.

Disability and Sport

The disability population in the United States is likely to grow as the Baby Boomer generation ages (McMillen & Mahoney, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). A 2009 report stated that 12.6% of the U.S. population consisted of people with disabilities, both of the physical and cognitive nature (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2009). People with disabilities, according to a study in the mid-1970s by Weinberg (1976), were seen as less happy, less cheerful, less physically attractive, and having lower self-confidence than able-bodied individuals. More recent studies have shown these perceptions remain as people with disabilities are seen as incompetent, unproductive, and dependent upon others particularly in social and job settings (Louvet, 2007; McMahon et al, 2008; Scherbaum, Scherbaum, & Popovich, 2005). This perception, however, may contradict reality in some cases. Weinberg (1984) found a majority of people with

disabilities acknowledged their disability as an important characteristic about them and a fact of life, and that half of people with disabilities would not want to become able-bodied but rather see their disability as an advantage. Life satisfaction among people with disabilities is dependent upon predictors such as acceptance of disability, activity, hope, spirituality, and demographic variables such as age, sex, marital status, and employment (Chen & Crewe, 2009; Gooden-Ledbetter, Cole, Maher, & Condeluci, 2007). Thus, despite the list of perceived negative characteristics of people with disabilities, emotional well-being and life satisfaction may not be that different from able-bodied individuals (Cameron, Titus, Kostin, & Kostin, 1973; Mailhan, Azouvi, & Dazord, 2005).

For those who experience negative psychological characteristics that often accompany a disability, social difficulties may be present as well, particularly if the individual does not actively participate in sport or recreation. People with disabilities may face social isolation, a term developed by Faris (1934), where they struggle to establish intimate social relationships with others, which reinforces loneliness (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Faris, 1934; Warner & Kelley-Moore, 2010). Social isolation often occurs when society misinterprets impairment with disability or handicap. The terms often are used interchangeably, although they carry different meanings. Coakley (2009) defined impairment as a “physical, sensory, or intellectual condition that potentially limits full participation in social and/or physical environments” (p. 50). Other definitions were slightly different as Bullock, Mahon, and Killingsworth (2010) defined impairment as “any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function, which might result from a disease, accident, genetic or other environmental agents” (p. 2). Therefore, impairment refers to a medical diagnosis or physical condition.

Bullock et al. (2010) defined disability as “any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or the range considered normal for a human being” (p. 2). Coakley’s (2009) definition was a bit more comprehensive and referred to the socially constructed constraints placed upon people with impairments and was present when “accommodations in social or physical contexts are not or cannot be made to allow the full participation of people with functional limitations” (p. 50). In this sense, disability is a socially constructed limitation due to impairment.

The term handicap is associated with perception. Coakley (2009) explained that when a person is handicapped, “others define them as inferior and ‘unable’ due to perceived disabilities” (p. 51). Bullock et al. (2010) defined handicap as “a disadvantage for a given individual that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual” (p. 2). Physical barriers that create disability may be a sidewalk without a curb cut for wheelchair access or steps to a facility’s only entranceway. With regard to sport, physical barriers may include insufficient accessible parking at a stadium or failing to offer adaptive or accessible equipment and trained personnel for people with physical disabilities to exercise. Social isolation then is further reinforced through disabilities created by physical barriers (Burgdorf, 1991; Hirst, 1989). Barriers become social in nature when perceptions of being unable are present, therefore creating a handicap for a person with an impairment. The impact of perceptions of being unable potentially reduces a person’s desire to participate in social activities. Therefore, society begins to dictate the actions of the individual, reducing internal locus of control and increasing external locus of control.

Locus of Control

Even at early childhood, leisure is critical for basic development of locus of control, which is one's own perception about the power source in life. External locus of control is when we perceive that we have no control and are merely pawns moved by forces outside of our realm. Internal locus of control is when we perceive that we are the origin of our own life events and is often connected to emotional maturity. Locus of control is essential for people with disabilities in negotiating the pursuit of sport or physical activity. External locus of control is exemplified when an individual's reasoning for not participating in physical activity is due to their impairment or some constraint they perceive to prevent them from participating. Internal locus of control is exemplified when a person with an impairment chooses to focus on what he or she can do despite the physical challenges that may be present (Russell, 2009).

Negotiation for locus of control can be seen as teenagers experience leisure through relationship development that is largely dependent upon others (Russell, 2009). College is filled with pursuits of independence, while the adult years that follow include certain leisure restrictions due to children or career patterns (Russell, 2009). The importance of locus of control in social recreation is enhanced for people with disabilities, particularly if they did not experience the previously described events growing up (Russell, 2009). For example, a person with a congenital impairment who experienced social isolation and was excluded from developing relationships as a teen may use sport to pursue those opportunities and reclaim internal locus of control. The challenge is whether opportunities are available for them.

People with disabilities often are viewed as people who cannot participate in sport (Brittain, 2004). Part of the reason for such a viewpoint is the "socially constructed nature of

sport as an able-bodied conception with rules and regulations designed to accommodate the needs and capabilities of the able-bodied population" (Brittain, 2004, p. 442). If sport is indeed constructed for able-bodied participants only, the social model of disability is supported where constraints come from society and not the physical nature of an individual.

There are two primary models of disability that categorize these constraints: the social model and the medical model. The social model removes medical analysis of disability and places emphasis on ability and any social constraints that prevent access (Grenier, 2011; Moola, Fusco, & Kirsh, 2011). Nixon (2000) explained how a person can be socially disabled by having a physical or mental impairment that limits certain activities due to socially created barriers, but that person may not be disabled in sport. For example, a person using a wheelchair may be viewed as having a disability, although that same person may compete as an elite athlete in wheelchair racing. Therefore, disability does not prevent participation in highly competitive sport and in fact the impairment may not be the focus of attention. The social model approach removes medical analysis of disability, although this is not universally popular because it ignores physical aspects of disability and other social divisions (Oliver, 2004).

The other approach is the medical model, where disability is strictly a medical diagnosis and irrelevant to societal constraints. The medical model assumes problems endured by people with disabilities are the result of their impairments (Areheart, 2008; Brittain, 2004; Kell, Kell, & Price, 2008). Those problems "are independent of the wider sociocultural, physical, and political environments" (Brittain, 2004, p. 430). Critics point out that the medical profession has created perceptions of disability that are now embedded within society since the medical model approach has been the dominant model of disability that describes the norms of how disability has been

governed in Western society (Areheart, 2008; Brittain, 2004). The result of such influence leaves "those with the most legitimate claim to determine and define the discourse in the area of disability (people who actually have disabilities)" as those "strongly encouraged to accept a discourse that is not in their best interests" (Brittain, 2004, p. 430). Drake (1996) was more direct with criticism, stating that "disabled people are urging general acceptance of the alternative notion that disability is exacerbated by the oppressive configurations of social institutions rather than the impact of individual impairments" (p. 20).

Viewing disability exclusively through one model can be problematic because a holistic view of the individual is not considered (Imrie, 1997). Imrie argued that the social model assumes changing the physical environment will result in changed experiences, but the medical model ignores social influences upon the individual's abilities. Rothman (2010) offered a middle ground for the social and medical models from the social work discipline with the bio-psycho-socio-cultural-spiritual framework. This framework is basic to social work practice and incorporates functioning of the physical body along with social qualities that may result in disability. Rothman (2010) argued that the advantage of the approach is that it "develops an understanding of the importance of viewing all people holistically rather than through a lens that perceives only certain aspects of each person" (p. 217). Rothman's offering may be plausible in the social work discipline and perhaps others have attempted to bridge the gap, but a middle ground to the social model and medical model had, at the time of this study, yet to be widely accepted in examining the disability population.

Considering the increased opportunities for people with different disabilities to participate in sport, this study aligned with the social model of disability. People with disabilities

who are not involved in sport or physical activity of some kind are apt to believe the perceptions society sets about their own abilities. Those individuals tend to have lower self-perception issues such as lack of body confidence and fail to pursue sport (Asken, 1991; Brittain, 2004). Conversely, sport can positively impact self-perception in all individuals (Sands & Wettenhall, 2000) and particularly in people with disabilities (Blinde & Taub, 1999; Groff, Lundberg, & Zabriskie, 2009). Fallon (1992) argued that sport participation is more valuable for people with disabilities than for able-bodied individuals because of the extreme outcomes both positively and negatively.

Sport can increase the value of one's self and subsequently represent the significance disability plays in one's life (Wright, 1983). For example, if a person with a disability has a high level of self-confidence, self-perception, and power, then that person's disability becomes less significant because it does not hinder daily life. The individual is more inclined to control his or her own life (e.g., internal locus of control) rather than allowing the disability greater influence over decisions (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2007). Sport participation increases internal locus of control because the decision-making regarding participation lies within the individual through positive freedom (e.g., the freedom to participate) and negative freedom (e.g., the freedom to decline participation; Jarvie, 2006).

For individuals with physical disabilities, adaptive sport (e.g., sport that has been adapted to allow people with disabilities to participate) provides avenues through which one may participate in physical activity, breaking through established social constraints. Yet, choosing to compete at the elite level places the person with a physical disability in a vulnerable position. If the individual chooses sport to seek independence and positive freedom, competition at the elite

level may include losing decision-making freedom due to controlling coaches who dictate daily tasks such as training schedules and eating habits (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Therefore, adaptive sport, particularly at the elite level, is not an exclusively positive experience.

Injuries become a concern at any level of sport, and injury patterns are not that different from able-bodied elite athletes and are typically minor in nature (Ferrara & Peterson, 2000; Nixon, 2000). However, injury risk and nutrition-related health problems are enhanced when athletes train full-time (Rastmanesh, Taleban, Kimiagar, Mehrabi, & Salehi, 2007). Also, negative psychological outcomes such as dejection, anxiety, and anger can stem from unsuccessful attempts at sport, and may compound when they affect concentration and subsequent performance (Vast, Young, & Thomas, 2010). Additionally, socially constructed constraints exist for adaptive sport as well as the individual risks of competing in sport.

Nixon (2000) pointed out that mainstream sports such as baseball, basketball, and football socially construct disability for people with physical disabilities because of few accommodations for athletes with disabilities to compete in an integrated environment with able-bodied athletes. Alternative options such as adaptive sports place people with physical disabilities in a separate classification from able-bodied competitors. The segregation of athletes into their own competitions with other athletes with disabilities presents a participation barrier and can be identified as a negative outcome of sport participation. It is the very nature of participating in sport for people with disabilities that reinforces the differences in ability. For example, basketball for people with disabilities is called wheelchair basketball, denoting a significant difference in participants. Conversely, some athletic events such as marathons and road races have integrated athletes with disabilities and able-bodied athletes to address this

participation barrier (Nixon, 2000). Removal of physical barriers can lead to a decrease in social isolation and an increase in sport participation. An increase in participation can lead to improved self-confidence, a sense of personal control, and greater value in social interaction as well as an increase in legal rights, visibility, and participation of people with disabilities in society (Lord & Hutchinson, 1993; Nixon, 2000). Additionally, physical fitness and health improve one's life through increased energy levels, strengthening immune systems and cardiovascular functions, and enhanced emotional status (Russell, 2009). While the activities have evolved, recreation and sport's role in modern lifestyles continues to be beneficial in numerous ways for people with physical disabilities.

Adaptive Sport

Adaptive sport is "any modification of a given sport or recreation activity to accommodate the varying ability levels of an individual with a disability" with its key feature being specialized equipment that facilitates independence (Lundberg et al., 2011, p. 205). The common purpose of adaptive sport is to "improve quality of life, health, confidence, and community integration of people with disabilities through recreation" (Lundberg et al., 2011, p. 205). It is common for hospitals and recreation centers to offer adaptive sport programs for people with disabilities, and many private organizations exist for that very purpose. Opportunities include recreational activities, competitive programs for individuals, and elite competition programs for athletes aspiring to compete at events such as the Paralympic Games.

That adaptive sport includes multiple levels of competitiveness affirms its place in the sport world; it is not simply an activity or pastime for people with disabilities. Adaptive sport has been viewed as a category of sport much like women's sport (Wolff, Torres, & Hums, 2008). A

potential criticism of this comparison is the marginalization of women's sport as a category of sport, which emphasizes the assumption that sport refers only to men's sport. Yet, DePauw and Gavron (1995) provided parallels between women and people with disabilities and their desire to participate in sport due to five primary constraints, four of which are within the scope of this research: lack of organized sport programs; lack of access to coaches and training programs; lack of accessible sport facilities; and limiting psychological and sociological factors. Progress has been seen with regard to organized sport programs, access to coaches and training programs, and psychological and sociological factors (DePauw & Gavron, 1995; Lundberg et al., 2011). Access to programs, facilities, and appropriate equipment, however, has been overlooked, despite legislation in the United States such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA, and consequently are necessities for adaptive sport participation (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Sport for people with disabilities has a long history, yet only recently have legal mandates and the rehabilitation of U.S. veterans significantly increased social accessibility and acceptance.

History of Adaptive Recreation

Activities and exercise have been documented as healing tools as early as 3000 B.C. as inactivity was once thought to lead to disease (Bullock et al., 2010). Ancient Greeks and Romans viewed exercise and recreation as essential components to a healthy life, but such activities were made exclusive to the able-bodied world shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire (Bullock et al., 2010). To better understand the history of adaptive sport, it is best to begin with a brief discussion of the treatment of people with disabilities.

People with illnesses and disabilities were often tortured and chained, sometimes leading to death, after the fall of the Roman Empire (Bullock et al., 2010). Early Christians, however,

impacted people with disabilities because of their stance on taking a life as a sinful act (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Still, improved treatment of people with disabilities did not ensure survival in tumultuous physical and social conditions until the Middle Ages. From the 5th to 15th Centuries, people with disabilities were taken into protective environments such as monasteries and royal courts (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Quality of life improved, although social status fluctuated. People with disabilities remained second-class, but perceptions of them were often dependent upon their condition. For example, Christians viewed people with cognitive disabilities as children of God, although many were employed in the royal courts for entertainment or small jobs. However, an individual with a mental illness was perceived to have been possessed by Satan, resulting in torture or execution (DePauw & Gavron, 1995).

Compassion replaced fear and hostility toward people with disabilities by the 18th Century. The general public took responsibility for educating the same population that had once been oppressed, although the educational conditions were not ideal (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). During the French Revolution, the mentally ill, once considered possessed, were placed in asylums outside of town while specialty schools were established for individuals who were blind or had a hearing disability (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Recreational opportunities were introduced into hospitals and state institutions in the 1800s, with nurses implementing bowling greens, music, and rocking horses as activities (Bullock et al., 2010; DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Shortly thereafter, local and national recreation programs for people with disabilities were established across the United States at the turn of the 20th Century (Bullock et al., 2010). This period placed emphasis on physical and cognitive disabilities, mostly due to the cost of war.

War and the resulting physical disabilities among soldiers increased the U.S. government's interest in care and treatment, and government organizations such as the Veterans Administration inherited a prominent role in rehabilitation efforts (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Those efforts began using sport for healing as the American Red Cross implemented recreational programs in hospitals as rehabilitative measures for World War I veterans (Bullock et al., 2010). The veterans were eager to get back to the lifestyles they knew prior to war and injury. Therefore, the treatment and rehabilitation of these individuals placed a spotlight on social integration because their lives prior to war had been socially mainstream (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). In the 1960s, hospital and rehabilitation centers across the United States established therapeutic recreation programs that routinely offered sport and physical activity for people with disabilities (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Integration of people with disabilities into society also occurred as parks and recreation systems were established across the United States. Green spaces and recreation areas were originally constructed to provide programs for "socially disadvantaged people" although demand from the general public forced programs to be all-inclusive (Bullock et al., 2010, p. 161). The growth of therapeutic recreation programs as well as acceptance of national parks and recreation systems signaled a national recognition of sport's effects on individuals regardless of ability.

History of Adaptive Sport

Organized sport for people with disabilities saw swift growth with regard to gaining public support. Schools for the deaf were home to the earliest adaptive sport programs possibly because games were adapted with few alterations to accommodate for the impairment. For example, physical education programs, football games, and basketball games maintained their

general rules and style of play with limited alterations of communication during the event. Schools for the deaf were formed with Protestant leadership and federal and state government support in the early 19th Century (Rosen, 2008). In the 1870s, a state school for the deaf in Ohio became the first to offer baseball to its students and later offered basketball and football (Bullock et al., 2010; Winnick, 1990). Football also was implemented in an Illinois state school in 1885, and basketball was introduced at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf in 1906 (Winnick, 1990).

Organized sport took root internationally at approximately the same time, as the Sports Club for the Deaf was founded in Berlin in 1888, followed by the establishment of six other national sport federations for people with hearing disabilities in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Holland, and Poland by 1925 (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). Interest in international competition arose both in the United States and abroad. With growth of organized sport came greater recognition of recreation personnel and opportunities in hospitals. The 1944 landmark opening of the Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, England, was the beginning of international organized sport competition for people with physical disabilities. The center was the first to recognize needs of people with physical disabilities to deinstitutionalize and transition into society (Bullock et al., 2010; DePauw & Gavron, 1995). The efforts at Stoke Mandeville Hospital were quickly echoed in the United States, as organizations and programs were established to provide similar transitional opportunities while also providing competition. The American Athletic Association for the Deaf was established in 1945 as the first organization in North America for athletes with disabilities to govern and promote competitive sport for people with hearing impairments in the United States (Bullock et al., 2010; Winnick, 1990). Shortly afterward, the Janet Pomeroy Center opened in 1952 in

California as a pioneering program for people with disabilities focused specifically on providing recreation. The recreation programs at hospitals and centers such as Stoke Mandeville and the Janet Pomeroy Center provided diversion, refreshment to the spirit, more positive attitudes toward therapy, mental and physical activity, and greater focus on health (Bullock et al., 2010). The mission of organizations such as these, however, split as some remained solely focused on recreational activities while others shifted toward competition at an elite and highly competitive level.

Sir Ludwig Guttmann, a neurosurgeon at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, introduced competitive sport as integral to the rehabilitation process of his veterans in the Spinal Injuries Centre (Winnick, 1990). Guttmann believed sport could be enjoyable, but that competition could further progress the patients' desires to reintegrate into society. Competition at Stoke Mandeville was restricted to those with spinal cord injuries, and 26 British veterans competed in wheelchair archery in what was identified as the 1948 Stoke Mandeville Games (Bullock et al., 2010; DePauw & Gavron, 1995). This initial competition planted stereotypical roots that adaptive sport still faces: (a) all athletes with disabilities are veterans who acquired an injury in combat, and (b) all athletes with disabilities use wheelchairs (Schantz & Gilbert, 2008). The initial restrictive criteria for competition, however, allowed Guttmann to advocate for the formation of other competitive sport organizations for people with other disabilities, such as the International Sports Organization for the Disabled, International Blind Sports Association, and Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). The Games progressed to become internationally recognized in 1960 as the first modern Paralympic Games, although they were not formally aligned with the International Olympic Committee until 1981

and did not use the term Paralympic Games until 1984 (Bullock et al., 2010; DePauw & Gavron, 1995). International competition, however, did not translate into international acceptance. China, for example, declined an invitation to the 1960 Games with an official statement that the country had no people with disabilities (Gold & Gold, 2007). Using China as the example, nations progressed in their acceptance of disability and became more interested in international competition. China established the Chinese Sports Association for Disabled Athletes in 1983, finished first in the medal count in the 2004 Paralympic Games, and hosted the Paralympic Games in 2008 (Gold & Gold, 2007; Pate, 2010).

Along with the expansion and acceptance of the Paralympic Games was the formalization of other national and international organizations and contests (DePauw & Gavron, 1995). These governing bodies and events aimed to provide opportunities for people with disabilities that were not included in the development of the Paralympic Games or did not qualify as participants. In the United States, Benjamin H. Lipton and Tim Nugent became the driving force behind the country's first wheelchair sports (Bullock et al., 2010). Nugent organized the first wheelchair basketball team at the University of Illinois in 1948, and a year later the university held the first wheelchair basketball tournament under Nugent's direction (Winnick, 1990). The National Wheelchair Basketball Association also was established in 1949 (Winnick, 1990). By 1955, Lipton established the National Wheelchair Athletic Association to help broaden wheelchair sport opportunities, and his leadership resulted in the 1957 U.S. Wheelchair Games (Winnick, 1990). Perhaps the most recognized example of organized competition for people with cognitive impairments was developed as the Special Olympics, a creation of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation "to provide and promote athletic competition for persons with mental retardation"

(Winnick, 1990, p. 15). The first international Special Olympics were held in 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago. The games have since developed into a regularly scheduled event that operates separately from competitions such as the Paralympic Games and with a different mission. The growth of adaptive sport through hospital recreation programs and eventually organizations and events transformed a sport social world that was once staunchly closed to people with disabilities into one that provided multiple avenues and subworlds through which to accomplish athletic goals.

Open Environment

Extensive scholarly work has been done examining how an individual accepts his or her own disability (Belgrave, 1991; Burgdorf, 1991; DeLoach & Greer, 1981; Hirst, 1989; Li & Moore, 1998; Linkowski, 1971; Linkowski & Dunn, 1974; Miller, 1986; Starr & Heiserman, 1977; Townend, Tinson, Kwan, & Sharpe, 2010; Wright, 1983). Research has also shown how external acceptance shapes the person (Devine, 2004; Mpofu, 2003; Oliver, 1993). When a person can deflect disability and focus on ability, he or she is more likely to begin living a more productive life personally and professionally (Linkowski, 1971; Townend et al., 2010). Deflecting disability, however, may be dependent upon inclusion and culture within society. Inclusion and culture with regard to an open environment are important to this study due to Lakeshore's open environment and athletes' sense of inclusion within the training site. Whereas other training locations exist for Paralympic athletes and teams, this study inquired as to why they choose Lakeshore as their preferred training location, with the inference that inclusion and the culture of the location may influence that decision.

Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined as a subjective sense of belonging, acceptance, and value (Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Therefore, inclusion is internal and external for the individual. Critical to being accepted is an open culture that makes participation by all possible (e.g., external). For example, sport that is only offered to able-bodied individuals who can walk without assistance and dribble a basketball is not inclusive. Conversely, inclusion is internal in that one's perception of being included can affect his or her acceptance of disability.

Psychological barriers such as accepting one's disability often are more difficult for the person to overcome (Li & Moore, 1998). For example, a person may feel more apprehension about social acceptance than physical acceptance or accessibility in a social setting. Those feelings of apprehension may be great enough to limit participation in activities, particularly when these issues arise at a young age (Blinde & McCallister, 1998). For many, the only avenue for inclusive sport participation is through therapeutic recreation programs at rehabilitation centers or hospitals where group outings may be perceived as positive for social benefits or negative due to the association with a medical treatment facility. Community recreation programs, however, offer a more inclusive and integrated setting by removing the focus of treatment or rehabilitation, which deinstitutionalizes the experience (Bullock et al., 2010; Lundberg et al., 2011).

Elite programs and competition such as the Paralympic Games offer a much different concept of inclusion. The Paralympic Games are an opportunity for elite athletes with disabilities to display their skills in sport and compete internationally against others of similar abilities.

However, the Games can be perceived as exclusive in nature. The classification system within the Paralympic Games follows a medical model approach as previously discussed. Paralympic Games classification is based on medical classification of disability. Kell et al. (2008) offered a critical lens through which to view the Paralympic Games and their association as a parallel event to the Olympic Games. The authors called for the merging of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) governing bodies to enhance the concept of inclusiveness at the most elite level of competition. To the authors, Olympic sport is not inclusive if it offers a parallel event rather than a combined event. Therefore, "inclusion is not reality until athletes, disabled or non-disabled, compete at the same events in the same teams" (Kell et al., 2008, p. 158).

The community recreation program and the concept of combining the Olympic and Paralympic governing bodies for inclusion is an example of integration with regard to people with disabilities. Integration, in this sense, enables people with and without disabilities to participate in activities together (Russell, 2009). Some sport organizations have implemented or considered implementing integration practices. The Special Olympics initiated a reverse integration program with a positive quality of bringing athletes together for the goal of getting better in sport. Wheelchair sports also have considered reverse integration to allow able-bodied participants to compete, displaying the difficulties of the sport no matter the level of ability. However, critics argue that the concept would diminish opportunities for people with disabilities due to limited positions available on teams. Still, integration has occurred:

- Two wheelchair races were held as exhibition games in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.
- Exhibition alpine and Nordic events were held at the Calgary Olympic Games in 1988.
- Track and swimming events for athletes with disabilities were held at the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, British Columbia.
- Wheelchair sprints were conducted as demonstration events at the World Championships in Athletics in 2001 in Edmonton, Alberta. (Bullock et al., 2010)

Wheelchair divisions are commonplace at regional events such as the New York Marathon and the Boston Marathon (Bullock et al., 2010). Inclusion for everyone, however, is not universally accepted. Many wheelchair sport governing bodies such as the National Wheelchair Basketball Association, National Wheelchair Athletic Association, and Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association believe that all of their sanctioned sports except swimming should be played in wheelchairs (Bullock et al., 2010). These organizations argue that the wheelchair, more than the disability, defines the sport, and this has been supported by scholars (Bullock et al., 2010; Kuppers, 2007). This idea excludes participants who do not use wheelchairs or may desire to compete in an ambulatory state. Integration is nullified by this stance. Some countries, though, hold events where people without disabilities compete in wheelchair sport (Bullock et al., 2010). Other organizations, such as the National Association of Sports for Cerebral Palsy, argue that if an athlete is ambulatory, he or she should compete as such even if they move more slowly (Bullock et al., 2010). The belief is that an athlete will be conditioned to push his or her capabilities to the maximum. However, if an athlete is ambulatory but chooses to compete in wheelchair basketball for security and safety, his or her exclusion

from competition runs contrary to the inclusive culture of disability sport. The concept of inclusion is important to exploring Lakeshore's training site due to Lakeshore Foundation's dual focus of training for Paralympic athletes and providing recreational opportunities to people with disabilities throughout the region. Inclusion is incorporated into the discussion with an interest in Lakeshore's integrated group of stakeholders (e.g., Paralympians and recreational athletes) that include people with and without disabilities.

Culture and Social Construction Theory

Disability sport can be considered a subworld of the larger social world of sport. Social worlds are social organizations comprised of people sharing interests and communication (Unruh, 1983). Rather than being defined by its relationship to the dominant culture, a social world is defined by a production of a social object, in this case sport. The social world's members are "linked by shared perspectives, unique activities and language, common channels of communication which rise out of common interest in the production of a social object" (Crosset & Beal, 1997, p. 81). Social worlds such as sport are divided into distinct subworlds such as disability sport where it can be defined on its own rather than through the context of the greater social world of sport (Albert, 1991; Chambliss, 1989). For example, goalball does not have an able-bodied sport with which it can be compared. Similarly, wheelchair basketball may be compared to able-bodied basketball, but with different rules and play the products are so vastly different that a comparison of the two sports is a stretch beyond using a ball and a rim.

Sport still can shape culture in different ways. Russell (2009) stated that "leisure can be an important source of growth as it widens a culture's relationship to the environment" and potentially "builds social identity and harmony" (p. 122). Based on the work of Loy and Booth

(2000), this approach could be characterized as a functionalist approach in that sport is a holistic benefit to society that meets needs of socialization and represents maintaining the status quo within that society (Loy & Booth, 2000; Woods, 2007). The Olympic Movement is centered on the concept of "sport for all" with ideals that blend sport with the inclusion of diverse cultures (Hums & Grevemberg, 2002; International Olympic Committee, 2007). As Wolff et al. (2008) argued, however, the Olympic Charter fights for inclusion of race, social class, and gender yet makes no mention of discrimination based on disability. The authors recognize, however, that the spirit of the Charter does not permit discrimination, providing a universal basis for inclusion, diversity, and human rights. Therefore, the culture of Olympic sport is one proclaiming to be inclusive without discrimination. An examination of women's opportunities in the Modern Olympic Games, for example, shows inequality since they were prohibited as participants or spectators at the Ancient Olympic Games (Coakley, 2009). Their participation has grown during the Modern Olympic Games from nonexistent in 1896, to 10% in 1952, to 42% in 2008 (Coakley, 2009). The International Olympic Committee did not have a woman as a member until 1981, and individual events such as distance races did not allow women participants until the 1980s and 1990s (Coakley, 2009). While the Olympic Charter appeared to be optimistic regarding discrimination, full inclusion still is a work in progress.

An inclusive culture at the elite level of sport, however, does not translate into an inclusive culture for disability. The disability culture is looked upon through an ethnocentric lens by others (Russell, 2009). Social construction theory suggests the reality in which we live is created by our social and cultural surroundings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Social constructionists refer to the various interpretations of "the wink" (Geertz, 1973). A person

winking from across the room may send a flirtatious perception, when in actuality the person may simply have debris caught in his or her eye. The application holds true for disability culture as well. A person with cerebral palsy may be perceived as having difficulty navigating stairs, when in actuality it is a daily routine for that individual. Or a person using a wheelchair may be perceived to be limited in mobility, when in actuality the wheelchair enhances the person's ability to move about. Social construction theory provides a framework for examining RQ2 and why athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore although other facilities also offer world-class facilities and services. For example, athlete services at one training site may be considered exceptional by one group of athletes but substandard by another group of athletes.

These socially induced perceptions come from associations and conversations with others who help shape one's self-identity (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This hearkens back to the social model definition of disability, although slightly different definitions reveal greater emphasis on society's influence. In that regard, disability can be the disadvantage or limited experience caused by social organizations and conditions (Barnes & Mercer, 2004; Coakley, 2009; Grenier, 2011; Oliver, 1992, 2004; Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, 1976). The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (1976) argued that it is "society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society" (p. 1). As previously detailed, Coakley (2009) offered a similar definition of socially constructed disability. Such oppression or unequal perception stems from a marked identity that comes with the culture of disability and individuals with physical disabilities (Rapley, 2004).

If sport can empower people with disabilities by allowing them to define goals and take initiative to achieve those goals, it is especially important for people with disabilities to have the right to choose their leisure (Russell, 2009). This independence within the culture advances self-advocacy for a group of individuals that, traditionally, has been oppressed (Russell, 2009). While therapeutic recreation programs have a place in rehabilitation, the right to choose also allows a person with a disability to seek sport in their own ways and seek a sense of normalization of the leisure experience (Russell, 2009). The experiences of able-bodied individuals, however, may be different from people with disabilities. The culture of sport and recreation is designed to emphasize efficient and productive bodies (Moola et al., 2011). Therefore, physical activity spaces like Lakeshore's training facility may alienate the disability population as individuals seek a sense of "normal" leisure, recreation, or sport experiences (Moola et al., 2011). Accessibility can be the first step toward offering a normal experience. Achieving a normal sport experience, per se, such as training at an exclusive club in preparation for competition in elite sport, is one form of inclusion. In fact, the culture of disability sport has focused on acceptance through inclusion, integration, or normalcy, which leads back to the focus of RQ2 and why athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore's training site. These aspects allow people with disabilities to redefine abilities and ultimately influence image perceptions from others (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2007).

Identity and Social Acceptance

Negative norms and perceptions stigmatize and stereotype people with disabilities, often due to physical appearance, and can leave the individual depressed or emotionally unstable due to the perceived image (Lundberg et al., 2011). DePauw and Gavron (1995) explained

stereotypes in that they "perpetuate overgeneralization and under-expectation, which have plagued persons with disabilities throughout history and have been evident in the limitations placed upon those who wish to enter sport" (p. 13). Achieving success in the ongoing battle against those stereotypes can shift perception. Sport can provide people with disabilities opportunities to challenge negative cultural norms or socially accepted perceptions (Ashton-Shaeffer, Gibson, Autry, & Hansen, 2001; Groff & Kleiber, 2001). The established perceptions are often challenged through building social networks in sport settings, experiencing freedom and success through participation, positively comparing one's self to others without disabilities, and experiencing a sense of normalcy due to similarities rather than exploitation of differences (Lundberg et al., 2011). Each of these results directly relates to challenges and deficiencies people with disabilities often face when they do not participate in sport: social isolation, dependence upon others, negative perceptions of self, and an inability to measure up to able-bodied individuals. Therefore, the concept of normalcy is paramount (Lundberg et al., 2011) and essential to this study for exploration of why athletes choose to train at Lakeshore, an environment that focuses on Paralympic sport and recreation for people with disabilities.

Achieving social acceptance and a sense of normalcy is often prohibited by the portrayal of people with disabilities in media. Print and online media coverage of sport and disability can be divided into two types: traditional and progressive (Schantz & Gilbert 2008). The traditional model sees the athlete with a disability as dysfunctional with successes portrayed as heroic accomplishments. The term used here is "super crip" in that media professionals place athlete successes on a pedestal, therefore downplaying their ability to begin from an even plane as other athletes (Hardin & Hardin 2008, p. 25). In particular, athletes with physical disabilities are

portrayed through general human interest stories, contrasting life's struggles with the success story of overcoming the odds (Bullock et al., 2010). The progressive model suggests it is not the individual's fault for being limited in any capacity, but rather society's fault for not adjusting properly. Many athletes prefer the progressive model of media coverage although they fear society would be hesitant to such a shift because of the attractiveness of the super crip stories (Hardin & Hardin 2008). For example, *People's* 1999 50 Most Beautiful People list included athlete/model Aimee Mullins, who is a double below-knee amputee (The 50 most beautiful people in the world, 1999). In the introductory text for Mullins, the publication immediately identified her as a person with a disability, although the text explained that Mullins did not want to be known primarily as having a disability. Super crip stories such as Mullins' are often what connect with readers and sell publications (Dummer 1998; Hardin & Hardin 2008).

Images and portrayals have changed some since the 1970s as acceptance of disability sport has grown (Bullock et al., 2010), but the identity confusion remains present and dependent upon the images put forth. People are known and judged by their surfaces, and these judgments placed upon people with physical impairments can have a severe effect (Austin, 2010). When NBC airs human interest stories of athletes in the Paralympic Games and presents a four-hour televised block of heroic performances that occurred in the Games, these individuals may be seen as people with disabilities doing extraordinary things. However, when ESPN airs the closing day of the Winter X Games with a lineup that includes the Mono-Skier X (i.e., adaptive downhill skiing) finals and highlights only athletic feats from the event, these individuals may solely be seen as athletes. Other media portrayals such as the 2005 wheelchair rugby documentary *Murderball* counter the traditional stereotypes of people with disabilities (Austin,

2010; Lindemann & Cherney, 2008). Wheelchair rugby appears to observers to be a combination of basketball and soccer for people using wheelchairs, a sport that, at times, presents a barbaric image of metal and body crashing into each other. The armored wheelchairs in the documentary contrast the stereotypical imagery of disability's delicate state and what a typical wheelchair represents in terms of disability, although much like personal wheelchairs the rugby chairs become a means of identity to the participants (Kuppers, 2007). This echoes the stance of many wheelchair sport organizations that view the chair as part of the sport (Bullock et al., 2010; Kuppers, 2007). In fact, *Murderball* exemplifies how sport contrasts disability stereotypes through the excessive display of masculinity and social acceptance of the film's subjects (Austin, 2010; Barounis, 2009; Lindemann & Cherney, 2008). At Lakeshore, the contrast in stereotypes occurs between the traditional therapeutic recreation/rehabilitation imagery and competitive sport among athletes using wheelchairs. The therapeutic recreation/rehabilitation imagery may equate to the traditional media coverage stance of highlighting success stories and personal achievements, while the competitive sport angle aligns more with the progressive stance of highlighting athletic achievements of athletes. Image conflicts such as these shape the identity of athletes with physical disabilities.

Identity

Identity stems from self-perception and social acceptance. Disability itself is considered an identity, and it can be altered by self and others (Rapley, 2004). Barton (1998) explained that "the level of esteem and social standing of disabled people are derived from their position in relation to the wider social conditions and relations to a given society" (p. 57). Therefore, one's place within society may dictate how others see an individual as well as self-perception,

particularly within an oppressed social group such as people with physical disabilities. People with physical disabilities find themselves in an identity crisis when perceived social acceptance does not meet actual social perceptions, resulting in stereotyping and negative labeling (Erikson, 1959; Mpofu, 2003). The result of this crisis is an identity change.

People with acquired physical disabilities already are faced with identity change (Swann & Bossom, 2008). The challenge for the individual is self-understanding and acceptance of a disability; at one time, the individual may have been considered able-bodied. Self-understanding and acceptance can increase through participation in “intellectual and creative leisure” or attempting to identify who one is (Munson & Widmer, 1997, p. 195). Sport for people with disabilities is at the center of this research and can provide ideal context for development of identity, and particularly athletic identity (Groff et al., 2009; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1990; Munson & Widmer, 1997; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995). Identities of individuals in subworlds such as disability sport, however, are not static and may include multiple identities (Donnelly & Young, 1988). A person who competes in wheelchair rugby at Lakeshore may have an identity as athlete, which precedes him or her being identified as a person with a disability, mother, father, co-worker when on the court. However, other identities emerge as the individual socializes with others and moves throughout other stages of his or her life such as work, home, or place of worship. These multiple and changing identities come from self-perception of identity as well as the perception of others (Donnelly & Young, 1988). For example, an athlete training at Lakeshore with a U.S. national team is simply known as a Paralympic athlete at the training site, but may hold other identities outside of the facility. A person with a disability who does not participate in sport may strictly be identified by their disability much like individuals are

identified by their profession. The individual is then challenged with correcting the misidentification with regard to ability level. Goffman (1963) elaborated:

> An individual can attempt to correct his condition indirectly by devoting much private effort to the mastery of areas of activity ordinarily felt to be closed on incidental and physical grounds to one with his shortcoming. This is illustrated by the lame person who learns or re-learns to swim, ride, play tennis, or fly an airplane, or the blind person who becomes expert at skiing and mountain climbing. (p. 10)

For the individual with a disability to participate in activities and sport, it facilitates identity change at all levels of sport (Lundberg et al., 2011). For example, children and people with cognitive disabilities who compete in the Special Olympics have higher levels of perceived confidence and greater self-esteem (Bullock et al., 2010). Another example is wheelchair tennis players who show more confidence in their skills and abilities than those who do not play the sport (Bullock et al., 2010). The result of each example is individuals participating in adaptive sport focusing less on disability and more on the identity development process (Groff & Kleiber, 2001).

Social Acceptance

When an individual successfully reclassifies his or her identity from a person with a disability to the new identity of athlete, it potentially alters the social perception and estimation of that individual (Goffman, 1963). Suddenly, the person in a wheelchair can compete, win, and lose, all actions that become identifiable to able-bodied athletes and society in general. Leisure also plays a role in recovering previous identities for people who acquired impairments (Hutchinson, Loy, Kleiber, & Dattilo, 2003; Kleiber, 1999; Kleiber, Hutchinson, & Williams,

2002). For the mother who water skied before her impairment, adaptive water skiing can assist her in reclaiming that previous identity. Team sports are effective for creating a positive image and social perception (Schneider, 2009). Concepts in team sports such as trust, reliability, and leadership emerge and crack the socially established ceiling of expectations for people with disabilities, although they may work to prevent entrance into a subworld of sport and disability (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Rediscovering or developing an identity through sport is ideal for social development and acceptance (Hanson, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).

Sport socialization and acceptance is different for athletes with and without physical impairments and is dependent upon age, gender, type of disability, and setting (Bullock et al., 2010). Even within disability, people with congenital impairments are exposed to a long-term socialization process due to their lifelong experiences, whereas those with acquired impairments have varying experiences dependent upon the age of onset (Bullock et al., 2010).

People with physical disabilities participating in sport can affect others' attitudes toward disability (Kisabeth & Richardson, 1985 as cited in Bullock et al., 2010). Seeing an individual with a spinal cord injury compete in wheelchair basketball may result in an able-bodied individual to re-evaluate his or her perceptions of disability in general. Therefore, integration can be impactful on both people with physical disabilities as well as able-bodied individuals. Also impactful, however, is a concept of inclusion with regard to sport and disability. Therefore, considering Lakeshore Foundation's integrated and inclusive environment for people with varying abilities, this study sought to better understand why athletes and teams choose to train there.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Case Study

Qualitative research is focused on how individuals make sense out of their lives through description and explanation as people construct their worlds and interpret experiences (Merriam, 2009). Not all authors agree on one true definition of case study, although a central component is the researcher's ability to identify the case (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). Rather than deciding on one uniform definition of case study methodology, it becomes clearer to view on a continuum dependent upon the researcher's paradigm, or theoretical assumptions, rules, and beliefs shared by researchers. The paradigm continuum includes opposing views of constructivist (i.e., truth is constructed between the researcher and participant) and positivist (i.e., there is only one truth that exists), as well as a range of other paradigms with differing approaches (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002). Identifying the continuum is essential because a researcher's paradigm is what guides the framework of action in a study (Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002).

This study adhered to the constructivist approach due to the construction of reality through interaction within social worlds, the potential for multiple truths, and the desire to describe, understand, and interpret those experiences (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Through constructivism, meaning is "not discovered but constructed" through engagement with the world (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). The nature of this study led to the possibility for multiple truths to be constructed with regard to operating a training facility for people with disabilities and why Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site was chosen by elite Paralympic teams. Interviews were conducted with athletes, coaches,

Lakeshore employees, and a USOC employee to document those multiple truths. Also, the uniqueness of the facility and that only two other U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites existed in the United States at the time of the study made it difficult to generalize.

Case study was an appropriate methodology to explore Lakeshore Foundation and why elite Paralympic athletes and teams were attracted to the facility. The researcher sought to understand a complex social phenomenon, the interest in insight, discovery, and interpretation, and seeking the answer to "how" and "why" questions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). In fact, those "how" and "why" questions were incorporated into this study's research questions:

RQ1: How was Lakeshore Foundation designated as the first U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site?

RQ2: Why do Paralympic athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore Foundation?

Examining such a phenomenon did not allow for manipulation of behavior to the extent of a laboratory setting and therefore pointed to case study as a preferred methodology (Yin, 2009). Case study can be defined as "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" where the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Central to the constructivist approach to case study is identifying the bounded system of study, a single unit of analysis to be examined within its context or setting (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). This study was conducted under Merriam's (2009) definition of case study with Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site as the case and the facilities and teams that train at Lakeshore serving as the two units of analysis.

Researchers have used case study to examine other organizations in and beyond sport. Adler and Adler (1988) examined organizational loyalty using collegiate athletics as context,

while Mills, Cervero, Langone, and Wilson (1995) explored the organizational structure and culture with regard to program planning. Systems also have been explored through case study as Adler, Goldoftas, and Levine (1999) studied the efficiency and flexibility of Toyota's production system. MacPhail, Gorely, and Kirk (2003) used case study methodology to examine youth socialization into sport through athletic clubs. This study examined organizational loyalty and structure, systems, and socialization within that system through the case study approach.

Strengths of Case Study

The strengths of using case study methodology are accessibility, unique viewpoints, and the inclusion of the human element to scholarly research (Merriam, 2009). The advantage of accessibility through case study methodology of answering "how" and "why" questions is that it can take the researcher or the reader into a real-life world that may not have previously been accessible (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Sport and disability is an understudied phenomenon in terms of access (Gold & Gold, 2007), athletes (Banack, 2009), governance and structure (Hums et al., 2003), the Paralympic Games in general (Gilbert & Schantz, 2008), and sport and disability as a whole (Prystupa et al, 2006). Thus, access leads to the ability to collect data from multiple sources through interviews, observations, and document analysis, all of which are considered strengths of case study (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Case study also is advantageous in relation to viewpoint in that a researcher may explore a familiar phenomenon but reveal new ways to view the phenomenon that can expand the readers' experiences (Merriam, 2009). This holds true in the laboratory setting where case study can complement experiments limited in context (Yin, 2009). However, case study focuses on the particular, providing rich, thick description that paints a detailed picture of the environment, and

discovering new meaning or extending what is already known about a phenomenon to improve real-life situations (Merriam, 2009). The advantage of using case study for this study in relation to viewpoint is it explored a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site in context. Rather than survey athletes or employees about the facility, this study implemented interviewing and observing athletes and employees within that very environment.

Finally, the human element is an advantage to case study as a methodology. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis as he or she is able to detect verbal and nonverbal communication and process data immediately, both of which are not possible in many quantitative methodologies (Merriam, 2009; Sjoberg, Williams, Vaughan, & Sjoberg, 1991). Quantitative inquires often lose the human element and therefore miss the deeper truth that comes from case study methodology (Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Sjoberg, et al., 1991).

Weaknesses of Case Study

Critics may charge that the human element is actually among the primary limitations of case study methodology, as well as a lack of rigor. Challenges to conducting case studies often begin with the researcher identifying a case and deciding which bounded system to study, (Creswell, 2007). Critics of single-case designs, like the one implemented in this study, argue that multiple-case designs offer more compelling and robust studies (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Conversely, the more cases included in a study, the less depth the researcher can reach in a single case; therefore, the single case can be more compelling (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1994, 2005).

Lack of rigor is often cited as a criticism of qualitative work in general, and case study methodology specifically (Yin, 2009). One point of contention for case study is it has no

systematic procedures to follow in regard to data collection, analysis, and reporting (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). This discretion among researchers then results in different approaches for different studies, and therefore reinforces the potential for bias in the study's design. Still, bias is found in quantitative methodologies (Rosenthal, 1966) as well as historical research (Gottschalk, 1968), so case study is not unique to such criticism. A case study protocol can address criticisms of rigor, bias, validity, reliability, and transferability (Yin, 2009). This study did not aim to generalize to a greater population, but the researcher took steps to ensure rigorous procedures throughout the study through the use of a case study protocol. Still, reliability may be impossible to achieve in case study due to a lack of control over the research variables (Merriam, 2009). In other words, a single case study protocol will not ensure all case studies are conducted the same way or duplication will produce the same results. Therein lies the reason case study was a chosen methodology for this study, because of the desire to understand a single case, the Lakeshore Foundation U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, rather than generalize. The understanding may in turn result in a blueprint for other training sites to follow.

Design

A case study design can strive for generalizability to a broader population with rigid methods for data collection and analysis and a focus on the process (Yin, 2009). Conversely, case study receives criticism for adopting a general approach to qualitative work with no true standard for data collection, analysis, or reporting (Merriam, 1998). In response to such criticism, case study should use systematic procedures to establish validity whether or not the potential for broader generalization of findings is a goal. This study was conducted through the constructivist

paradigm due to the topic selection; however, characteristics from more rigid approaches to case study are present within the design.

The theoretical framework consisted of elements from systems theory, stakeholder theory, and social construction theory. Case study protocol maintained the focus of the study and allowed the researcher to anticipate problems as the study progressed (Yin, 2009). For example, mapping an overview of the case study with objectives, issues, and readings maintained direction for the study. Mapping field procedures kept the researcher close to the purpose. Creating questions in advance organized data collection, and creating a guide for reporting positively affected the process of the overall study (Yin, 2009).

Credibility is essential to establish with the design because of the potential subjectivity within case study methodology (Yin, 2009). Adequate means to establish credibility in case study research are triangulation, member checks, prolonged engagement, peer review, reflexivity, and rich, thick description (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Establishing credibility in the research process addresses bias, one of the primary misunderstandings of case study's methods of data collection and analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Bias is a common criticism of case study, but there is no greater bias in case study data collection and analysis than in any other method of inquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Still, sampling, data collection procedures, and analysis procedures must be addressed with some rigor to present trustworthy findings.

Methods

Three forms of data collection were utilized for this study: interviews, observations, and document analysis. Each form of data collection will be addressed with regard to its role in case study methodology.

Interviews

Interviews are structured yet fluid conversations with a purpose to understand from the subjects' point of view (deMarrais, 2004; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Yin, 2009). The richness of data provided through interviews makes them an essential source for case study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Observation has been suggested to come prior to interviews for data collection to help establish informants and identify participants, but no matter the order, interviews provide information that is unseen such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009).

Interviews for case study require the researcher to establish and maintain rapport with the participant while simultaneously attempting to use the interview to achieve the study's purpose (Spradley, 1979; Yin, 2009). The difficulty in maintaining that balance depends upon the type of interview conducted by the researcher. Yin (2009) and Merriam (2009) both suggested three types of interviews for data collection. Yin's (2009) survey interview is comparable to Merriam's (2009) standardized interview, both of which are comprised of predetermined wording and structured to solicit information that is not expanded upon by the researcher. From there, the two scholars offered different types of interviews with one focused on process (Yin, 2009) and one on product (Merriam, 2009).

Merriam's (2009) semi-structured interview is conducted with an interview guide but provides flexibility for the researcher to respond to answers and ask follow-up questions to explore topics of interest brought on by the participant. This study included semi-structured interviews during data collection with the researcher using an interview protocol to guide the questioning but also allowing the participant to respond freely while following-up on topics of

interest introduced by the participant. This line of questioning adhered to narrative interviews with the aim of allowing the participant to provide insight from his or her experiences through storytelling (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The questioning also adhered to the constructivist view that meaning is constructed between the participant and the researcher and that multiple truths exist. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are open-ended and allow the participant to define his or her own experiences (Merriam, 2009). The researcher included experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background questions in this study to maximize the data collected through interviews (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Interviews were digitally recorded, providing verbatim transcription that ensured validity and accuracy within the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 2009).

Strengths of interviews. Interviews are unlike other forms of data collection in that they allow the researcher and reader to enter into the participant's perspective (Patton, 2002). Other forms of data collection may provide information to the researcher, but interviews create a means of data collection where information can be queried for explanation, clarification, or expansion in real time. Thus, interviews give a participant the ability to attach meaning to observations, feelings, thoughts, and intentions in his or her own voice (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Interviews also are a unique form of data collection in that they provide the researcher with greater control of the study's direction, making it a more targeted and insightful means of gathering information than some other methods (Yin, 2009). For example, a survey method requires the researcher to be limited in follow-up questioning or obtaining non-verbal cues when the participant responds. However, semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for the

researcher to seek instant clarification or follow-up information during the interview. For this study on a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, interviews provided rich data that completed information gaps from observations and document analysis.

Weaknesses of interviews. Weaknesses of interviews relate to potential bias and inaccuracy. With interviews, bias can be present in constructing interview questions, delivering the questions, interpreting answers, and reporting participant quotations (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Articulating the questions to participants may introduce bias from the researcher, perhaps unknowingly. Social desirability bias may exist due to the researcher's presence, resulting in a participant's answers reflecting what the researcher wants to hear (Yin, 2009).

Even after the interview has been completed, the researcher may not be able to include an accurate depiction of the environment and non-verbal cues that occurred within the interview setting (Merriam, 2009). Despite attempts at establishing an interview protocol and taking steps to minimize bias, objectivity is impossible when the researcher is affected by his or her own predispositions, especially when the researcher has spent a significant amount of time with the group under study (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Therefore, due to a personal history with disability, the time spent by the researcher invested in the topic of disability may have opened the possibility of bias within this study. For example, the researcher had a history of participating in physical activity programming for people with disabilities and had lived with a physical disability for 33 years at the time of this study. Any predispositions to physical barriers or experiences described by the participants during interviews ran the risk of being accentuated by the researcher due to personal experiences.

Observation

Like interviews, observation has unique characteristics that make it a desirable method for data collection in case study. Through observation, the researcher is able to collect data in natural settings as opposed to a laboratory or through an instrument sent to participants (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). However, observation is not as simplistic as watching an event occur; it is a tool only when used systematically with "checks and balances" to address a research question and produce trustworthy results (Merriam, 2009, p. 118). Therefore, observing a phenomenon leads a researcher to take field notes, tracking the setup of the environment, identifying and describing the people, and detailing scenes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Such rigor can be considered formalized so that a researcher counts the number of times something happens, or casual to where he or she merely documents the environment and conditions (Yin, 2009). Both forms, however, have been subject to criticisms.

Observation, whether formal or casual and irrespective of the type, has been considered the "fundamental base of all research methods" because of its root in the researcher's knowledge and judgment (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 105). This method of data collection often precedes other methods in that it is the first step to capturing the case or culture, and consequently can lead the researcher to identify key informants and participants for other means of data collection (Merriam, 2009). The researcher must have a clearly defined role in observation to recognize the potential extent to which he or she affects the outcome of data collection, and that role evolves within the research process to optimize data collection (Adler & Adler, 1998; Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The role of the researcher in this study was participant as observer, where the researcher was a member of the group but made his role known (Gold,

1958). This role was selected because the researcher acknowledged that no matter the level of participation by the researcher, his presence affected the environment and therefore the researcher was always acting as a participant if his identity was revealed.

Observation is a three-step process of gaining entry and trust with gatekeepers, data collection, and smooth exit (Merriam, 2009; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Upon entry, researchers should collect data until information becomes saturated rather than determining a set number of observations or site visits (Merriam, 2009). The researcher should approach taking field notes with a checklist of description in mind with regards to the physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and the researcher's own behavior to better track potential saturation (Merriam, 2009).

Strengths of observation. Among the strengths of observation are its roots in capturing the environment of events in real time with respect to context of a particular case (Yin, 2009). This can be done because observation takes place where the phenomenon occurs rather than in an artificial environment or through an instrument sent to participants (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Data collection in a participant's environment provides the researcher with a detailed and descriptive understanding of the issue, which can reinforce authenticity through reporting the findings (Creswell, 2007).

In addition to collecting data in the participant's environment, observation is a form of inquiry that may lead to data that otherwise would not be possible to collect. Observation can be perceived by participants to be less intrusive when participants are not comfortable discussing certain topics, providing a fresh perspective on an issue of interest (Merriam, 2009). It is rooted in seeing is believing, in that interviews may allow the participant to share a story or explain a

feeling but observation has the potential to show those stories or feelings so the researcher can better capture context and behavior (Merriam, 2009).

Weaknesses of observation. Weaknesses of observation are that it is time consuming and highly subjective (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Time spent during observation results in a cost, but only to the researcher as he or she must decide if that cost is worth the information. Subjectivity brings into question a study's reliability (Merriam, 2009). This can be addressed through rigorous field notes and reflexivity in the written report, separating the researcher's interpretations from the field facts (Creswell, 2007). Memory recall, even if field notes are taken on site or immediately following observation, can further validity concerns if video recording the scene is not optional (Merriam, 2009).

Also considered a weakness of observation are the logistics of the method as the researcher must make decisions on how to carry out the observation. No universal rule book guides the researcher through observation protocol, so the researcher is faced with decisions of what role he or she will assume in the observation, whether to disclose the role of observer to the participants, and how to combine participation with observation so that neither is a deterrence to the other (Creswell, 2007; Gans, 1982; Merriam, 2009). Decisions such as these affect the researcher as well as participants and the reader. Failure to disclose a researcher's role in observation or not gaining permission to observe a site sheds light on ethical concerns of privacy and informed consent (Adler & Adler, 1998; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). While not all weaknesses can be contained by the researcher, many can be addressed through protocol and planning.

Document Analysis

Document analysis was a third form of data collection used in this case study. Documents provide a "ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). In document analysis for research, common documents include a variety of sources that may include official records, letters, corporate records, and historical accounts (Merriam, 2009). The inclusion of document analysis can reveal information, particularly with regard to program evaluation, about things that are unable to be observed or that have taken place prior to the research study, which may not have been disclosed to the researcher (Patton, 2002).

Essential assessments in document analysis include authenticity and conditions under which the document was produced. The researcher must consider the author, place, and date of writing during assessment, in addition to the context in which the document exists (Merriam, 2009). For example, a news story appearing in the newspaper about a facility's accessibility contains a different form of bias than a press release from the facility, which is more direct with self-promotion.

A form of coding in document analysis is content analysis, which Merriam (2009) defined as "a systematic procedure for describing the content of communications" (p. 152). Modern content analysis has shifted from quantitative to qualitative, as Merriam (2009) argued that the "nature of the data can also be assessed" (p. 153). In such case, content may be analyzed in search of themes that may be constructed from the documents under study.

Strengths of document analysis. Document analysis may be the best source of data collection on a particular subject because of access and stability. Documents are easily

accessible, free, and contain information that otherwise would have taken the researcher a much greater amount of time to collect (Merriam, 2009). Public records are open to any individual for review, and corporate records may be obtained with permission from the organization's gatekeepers.

Also an advantage to document analysis is stability. Information on printed documents will not change, although online documents have the option of being updated by the editor or website operator. Printing the online documents can alleviate this issue. The content, therefore, has potential to offer consistent information that transcends time as the researcher's presence does not alter data being studied the same way the presence of an investigator may influence responses during an interview or may alter actions during an observation (Merriam, 2009). Critics, however, argue against the stability of document contents due to the potential biases of the creators or authors as well as the biases of the researcher during interpretation (Booth, 2005). Those biases reinforce the notion of constructing multiple truths from the data.

Weaknesses of document analysis. Three primary weaknesses of document analysis are the state of documents, the format, and the authenticity and accuracy (Merriam, 2009). Most documents under study were not originally developed for research purposes, and therefore they may be incomplete with regard to detail that the researcher is seeking. Additionally, the format of the documents may be such that they are not useful for the researcher and therefore present alternate findings from other data forms.

Two major weaknesses of document analysis are authenticity and accuracy. While documents offer strength in stability through preservation of the content, documents contain built-in bias of which the researcher may be unaware. For example, an organization's press

release has a different bias than a news story on the same topic. Additionally, online documents do not have a stable home or permanent resting place; they may appear on a website one day and be gone the next day. Therefore, stability of documents in an online setting cannot be taken for granted, and bias is present due to decisions about content made by the document's creators or editors.

This Study's Design

This study was a single-case embedded design which required "careful investigation of the potential case to minimize the chances of misrepresentation and to maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence" (Yin, 2009, p. 50). The embedded design included multiple units of analysis within the one case (Yin, 2009). For this study, the single case was Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, with the two units of analysis: the staff at Lakeshore Foundation and the teams that train at Lakeshore Foundation. The challenge of an embedded design is for the researcher to avoid focusing only on the subunit level of inquiry and losing sight of the larger unit of analysis, although a case study protocol assisted in directing the investigator's focus (Yin, 2009). Under Merriam's (2009) classification of case study, the portion of this study examining Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site was defined as an intrinsic design. An intrinsic case is "undertaken when the researcher is interested in a particular case itself" as the purpose is not to understand an abstract concept or to build theory, but rather because the researcher is interested in the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009, p. 47; Stake, 2005). The researcher gathered specifics about the case rather than abstract information or theory building. The portion of this study focused on how Lakeshore Foundation has built a reputation for being a training destination of

choice and why teams choose to train at there is defined as an explanatory case study by Yin's (2009) classification, seeking to answer "how" and "why" questions.

An informant was identified at Lakeshore and assisted with identifying potential participants, scheduling site visits, and answering basic questions for conducting the study. The informant was identified by e-mailing a Lakeshore employee with the purpose of this study and seeking approval and assistance to pursue the study. The employee put the researcher in contact with another employee who became the informant for the organization. Contact was maintained with the informant through e-mail for the duration of this study.

Triangulation and rich, thick description were means for establishing credibility in this study. Triangulation was achieved through interviews, observation, and document analysis with the researcher serving as the primary instrument (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Interviews were conducted with Lakeshore employees, one USOC employee, U.S. Paralympic athletes, and U.S. Paralympic coaches. Observation was conducted during two Paralympic training camps held at Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. Document analysis was conducted on Lakeshore Foundation's application to become a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, the USOC's criteria for designating training sites, and Lakeshore Foundation's website. Rich, thick description also was part of this study's reporting, as the researcher attempted to describe the environment in which observation took place. Rich, thick description is a means of using words to transport the reader into the setting by painting a picture of the scene and being as vivid as possible about the details within the environment (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). These forms of establishing credibility assisted in identifying researcher bias and attempted to establish the best possible design to collect and analyze data.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used because the case was identified and the study explored Lakeshore Foundation's application to be designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and why Paralympic teams train there. Within the umbrella of purposeful sampling, unique sampling was used in the selection of the case because Lakeshore Foundation was the first location to be designated as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, a unique attribute that made the case different from other elite training facilities (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.f; Merriam, 2009). Two types of purposeful sampling were used in this study to construct two sample groups. Convenience sampling was used to seek coaches for participation in interviews for sample group 1 whereas snowball sampling was used to seek athletes as the coaches suggested which athletes should be invited to participate (Merriam, 2009). The researcher scheduled visits to Lakeshore Foundation based on the training camp schedule for Paralympic teams willing to participate in the study. Sample group 2 was comprised using snowball sampling, seeking employees at Lakeshore Foundation and with the USOC for participation in the study, attempting to capture experiences of the average person working directly with elite Paralympic athletes (Merriam, 2009). Capturing different perspectives from athlete and coach participation as well as including employees as participants was chosen to construct the most accurate portrayal of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Only one USOC employee was invited to participate because the employee was the only person identified by the USOC informant who worked directly with the training sites.

The total sample for this study was 15 participants: five Lakeshore employees, one USOC employee, five U.S. Paralympic athletes, and four U.S. Paralympic team coaches. The

participants were treated as two groups: (a) employees and (b) athletes and coaches. Saturation was researched after six interviews with six participants classified as employees as participants were making similar statements in response to the questioning. Saturation was reached after nine interviews with nine athletes and coaches.

The sample was limited in diversity. Of the five Lakeshore employees and one USOC employee, four were female and two were male. All five athletes were female, and all four coaches were male. All athletes and coaches were from the U.S. women's goalball team and the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team. All participants were white. Gender and racial differences shape socialization, and therefore shaped the experiences of the participants in this study (Bullock et al., 2010). The lack of gender and racial diversity was not a representation of Lakeshore's population of stakeholders or U.S. Paralympic athletes and coaches and is discussed further in the Limitations section. Additionally, participants were not described in detail for the purposes of rich, thick description due to the small sample size and to avoid compromising confidentiality.

Confidentiality

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee, and each individual invited to participate in this study was informed of the study's purpose and required to sign an informed consent. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to assist in protecting their identity. Lakeshore employees were assigned the pseudonym "Employee" with ascending numbers attached (e.g., Employee 1, Employee 2, etc.). The USOC employee was assigned "USOC 1" as a pseudonym. Paralympic athletes were assigned "Athlete" as a pseudonym with ascending numbers attached (e.g., Athlete 1, Athlete 2, etc.). Finally, the

Paralympic team coaches were assigned “Coach” as the pseudonym with ascending numbers attached (e.g., Coach 1, Coach 2, etc.). While this identification method tends to carry positivist characteristics, the choice was made to maintain a single voice from each of the sample groups and to preserve confidentiality despite constraining the attempt at rich, thick description. For example, all coaches were identified as “Coach” in their pseudonym to preserve the single voice of coaches for the reader. The participants were informed that an effort would be made by the researcher to keep their comments and participation confidential, although due to the sample in this study full confidentiality may be impossible. For example, while there were more than 100 employees at Lakeshore Foundation at the time of this study, the U.S. women’s goalball team had only six players, and the U.S. women’s wheelchair basketball team had just 18 players. The small pool from which participants were drawn lends itself to natural challenges with regards to confidentiality. Further attempts to preserve confidentiality were to eliminate citing names of individuals when personal communication was used to identify factual information. Therefore, factual information revealed through conversations is cited in this study in reference to the source’s title (e.g., Lakeshore employee, personal communication).

Challenges to protecting the participants’ identity were realized by the researcher, forcing decisions to be made on what information was kept confidential to protect the participants and what information was revealed to preserve the research. Names of the participants were kept confidential, although the sports in which the athletes participated were revealed due to the unique characteristics of each sport that directly related to answering the research questions. Other challenges presented themselves due to the physical disabilities of the participants. For example, visual impairments presented different challenges than other physical impairments, and

participants had different experiences. The decision was made to avoid describing in detail each physical disability to preserve confidentiality and to maintain the study's focus on Lakeshore's accessible facilities and the experiences of Paralympic teams training there.

Data Collection

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and document analysis (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Data collection took place between November 2011 and January 2012. The researcher visited Lakeshore Foundation's Paralympic Training Site in Birmingham, AL, on two occasions, during a U.S. women's goalball training camp and during a U.S. women's wheelchair basketball tryout. On both visits, the researcher arrived mid-day and stayed overnight in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site dormitory on the Lakeshore Foundation campus, the same facility at which the visiting athletes and coaches stayed. Interviews with and observations of athletes, coaches, and Lakeshore employees were conducted during both visits. An interview with a USOC employee was conducted over the telephone during the data collection period. Document analysis was conducted during the second site visit when the researcher photographed Lakeshore's application for training site designation. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site Designation Plan from the USOC also was analyzed through the USOC's website. Also, the Lakeshore website was analyzed during the data collection period.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with five Lakeshore employees, one USOC employee, five Paralympic athletes, and four Paralympic team coaches who bring their respective teams to train at the site. Lakeshore employees were invited to participate through snowball sampling, using the Lakeshore informant to seek other interviews. The informant provided the researcher with a list of Lakeshore employee names who may have the best

knowledge of the organization's history as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and its day-to-day functioning. The employees were informed of the study and invited to participate. Five Lakeshore employees participated. Interviews were conducted with three employees during the first site visit and two employees during the second site visit. One USOC employee was invited to participate in the study due to job responsibilities. The USOC employee agreed to participate, and a telephone interview was conducted in January 2012. Each interview with the Lakeshore and USOC employees lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Lakeshore employees were asked questions about the training site's history in addition to questions adapted from the Hospitality Culture Scale developed by Dawson, Abbott, and Shoemaker (2011) and its Factor III: Leadership to gain insight of how Lakeshore employees offer service to athletes.

Interviews also were conducted with five U.S. Paralympic athletes and four Paralympic coaches affiliated with two national teams. The first site visit was scheduled concurrently with the U.S. women's goalball team training camp, and a coach and three athletes agreed to participate in the study. The second site visit was scheduled concurrently with the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team tryout, and three coaches and two athletes agreed to participate in the study. Each interview with the athletes and coaches lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Athletes and coaches were asked about their desire to train at Lakeshore Foundation's training site and the service it provides during their training camps. The interviews focused on why the teams and athletes traveled to Lakeshore, and a portion of the interviews were based upon SERVQUAL interview questions developed by Landrum, Prybutok, Zhang, and Peak (2009) as well as Hardin's (2009) service quality questionnaire. The adapted questions addressed environmental attributes, functional attributes, and technical attributes.

With regard to environmental attributes, the environment is important to satisfaction levels due to the amount of time a consumer spends in that environment, which affects overall perception of quality in the service (Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1990; Wakefield, Blogett, & Sloan, 1996). In turn, perceptions of a facility influence excitement and satisfaction (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1993), desires to stay in the environment (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wakefield et al., 1996), and the chance of returning to the facility (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Wakefield et al., 1996). Functional attribute questions were included to gauge athletes' and coaches' evaluation of how a service was delivered at Lakeshore Foundation, specifically from employees. An example of a functional attribute question is, "How does Lakeshore's ability to perform a service shape your experience?" Functional attributes are critical to explore because employees often are the first point of contact for the consumers and represent the face of the organization. Environmental attribute questions were included to garner the experiences of using the facility itself. Questions for this study sought participants' experiences of accessibility at Lakeshore's facilities and their use of the equipment and dormitory on the site.

Strengths and weaknesses to interviewing were previously identified, and the interviews for this study were not immune to either. The greatest strength of interviews for this study was that the researcher sought instant clarification and expansion of answers provided by the participants. When a topic was discussed by the participants about which the research did not inquire, the researcher slightly altered the direction of the interview to include that topic in greater detail by acknowledging it was significant to the participant. An example was when the goalball athletes discussed design markings on the floor of Lakeshore's dormitories and how

they guided individuals with partial sight. The researcher followed by asking how important that design aspect was with regard to influencing the athlete and team to return to Lakeshore to train. Additionally, interviews provided more targeted and insightful means of gathering information, particularly when athletes and coaches discussed service quality attributes displayed by Lakeshore employees and when Lakeshore employees explained how their focus shifted when U.S. Paralympic teams visited the facility for training camps.

A weakness of the interviews conducted for this study was social desirability bias (Yin, 2009). In the case of Lakeshore employees, much of the information disclosed to the researcher was positive regarding the facility's accessibility, programming, and how athletes and teams are attracted to training there. While this may be accurate, it should be recognized that the participants may have consciously or subconsciously tried to portray their employer in a positive light. It was acknowledged that the environment (e.g., conducting the interviews at Lakeshore) may have influenced a positive tone for the participants. Additionally, a challenge faced during interviews was preventing the researcher from being affected by his own predispositions of accessibility and disability. With Lakeshore being a fully accessible facility, a rare quality among sport facilities in general, the researcher had to strive to maintain objectivity with regard to asking others about the services offered and the opportunities available at Lakeshore. For example, the researcher refrained several times from asking leading questions about Lakeshore's accessibility and consciously made an effort to maintain the integrity of the questions so as to preserve the participants' voices.

Observation. Observation was conducted at Lakeshore Foundation's training site during U.S. Paralympic team training camps. The first observation occurred during a U.S. women's

goalball training camp. The second observation was during a U.S. women's wheelchair basketball tryout.

Four observation periods were conducted during the first site visit. The first observation was on the first day of Visit 1 from 12:30 p.m. until 2 p.m. during a tour of the training site conducted by a Lakeshore Foundation employee. The focus of this observation was on the layout, background, and accessibility of the facilities. Field notes were documented at the conclusion of the tour when the researcher typed detailed notes about the tour based on recall. The second observation was conducted the same day from 4 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. in the Lakeshore Foundation fieldhouse lobby. The focus of this observation was on the activities of the facility's recreational services as local consumers visited the site to participate in recreational physical activity classes or use the facility's services. Field notes were kept on a note pad, drawing a diagram of the environment and documenting activity as well as interpretations of the activity, all of which were typed into a digital file. The third observation was conducted from 4:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. in the fieldhouse where youth sport programs were held on that night. The focus of the observation was to experience how Lakeshore Foundation served its recreational users of different ages and abilities. The fourth observation was conducted from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. in the fieldhouse where the U.S. women's goalball team held the majority of its training camp. The focus of the observation was to experience how Lakeshore Foundation employees served a Paralympic team during its training. A single observation session was held the second day of Visit 1 from 8:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. in the fieldhouse. During the observation, the U.S. women's goalball team conducted a practice period that included drills and a scrimmage. The focus of the observation was to experience a Paralympic team training at Lakeshore

Foundation's training site and using the facilities and employee services. Field notes of the third, fourth, and fifth observations were taken in a manner consistent to the second observation with a diagram of the environment as well as noted activity and interpretation.

Three observation sessions were conducted during the second site visit. The first observation session was held the first day of Visit 2 from 4 p.m. until 5 p.m. in the fieldhouse. During the observation, Lakeshore Foundation's competitive youth teams practiced wheelchair basketball. The focus of the observation was to observe recreational athletes of different ages and abilities, observe the Lakeshore employees, and to compare and contrast with a similar observation from the first visit. Activity and interpretations were documented in the field notes on notebook paper and transferred to a digital file. The second observation was held the second day of Visit 2 from 10:30 a.m. until 11:17 a.m. in the fieldhouse while the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team conducted a tryout with 18 athletes. The focus of the observation was to experience a Paralympic team training and conducting a tryout at Lakeshore's facility. The third observation was held the second day of Visit 2 from 2:20 p.m. until 4:37 p.m. in the fieldhouse. The U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team conducted its tryout and training session, with the focus of the observation on experiencing another training session to compare and contrast with previous observations. Field notes for the second and third observations were created in a digital file with a laptop computer on site, describing the environment, documenting activity, and providing interpretation of the activity.

Strengths and weaknesses of observation were previously outlined, and this study had qualities of both. The strengths of observation with regard to this study were that it allowed the researcher to capture the environment in real time, which led to data that may not have been

collected through other forms. Observation allowed the researcher to experience office, lobby, recreational activity, and Paralympic training camp environments that captured a sense of daily routine at Lakeshore Foundation. Where interviews allowed employees, athletes, and coaches to tell stories, observation corroborated much of the data by allowing the researcher to see those stories unfold. An example was the athletes explaining the extra attention given to them by the Lakeshore employees during their training camps, and observation revealed that multiple Lakeshore staff members set up the training stations, knew athletes' names, and took steps to ensure personal attention for the teams during nontraditional business hours.

Weaknesses of observations detailed in the literature also were present during this study. Field notes were taken during much of the observations, although the researcher was forced to rely on memory recall during the initial tour of the facilities. To combat this weakness, for example, the researcher ended the initial observation session and tour by spending time in the dormitory recording field notes on what was seen and discussed during the tour. Additionally, the researcher must always evaluate what role he or she will assume during observation. For this study, the researcher was an observer-participant as the employees, athletes, and coaches knew the researcher was observing and therefore may have altered their actions.

Document analysis. Document analysis was part of this study as the researcher requested primary sources such as organizational documents related to Lakeshore Foundation's application to be designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. Documentation of Lakeshore's designation as a training site was sought from the informant at Lakeshore as well as the chief executive officer. The staff produced the original application document Lakeshore Foundation submitted to the USOC in February 2000 to be considered for designation as a Paralympic

Training Site. The document was analyzed for historical content and to gain knowledge of the language used in proposing USOC designation as an official training site. Additionally, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site Designation Plan from the USOC was analyzed from the USOC website. The Lakeshore Foundation website also was examined for content relevant to Lakeshore's training site. Each webpage used in document analysis was printed to preserve its content for this study.

Strengths and weaknesses of document analysis were observed during this study. Access and stability were strengths of this study's document analysis. The application document was provided by Lakeshore employees without question or objection, and digital photographs were taken of the application. The researcher visited the websites with a personal computer, and the pages used were printed to preserve the content. Conversely, the weaknesses of this study's document analysis were that the organizational documents and websites were not designed for research purposes, and therefore the researcher spent a lengthy period of time examining the documents for detailed information. It should be noted that the online content from Lakeshore's website and the USOC's website may not be archival information as the content can change at the organization's discretion.

Data Analysis

Case study data analysis procedures may have quantitative principles through pattern matching and analysis (Yin, 2009) or may focus on narrative analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stake, 1995). Narrative analysis is an evaluation of central details of a story, summarizing stories and events to gain meaning from them while focusing on the structure of stories with regard to plot, scenes, actors, time, and setting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Meaning

condensation was the type of narrative analysis used for this study. Long passages of interview transcripts and field notes were analyzed and shortened to meaning statements (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The researcher read through each interview and determined natural meaning units, then restated the theme of the meaning unit and examined each unit as it related to the study. Constant comparative method was used during data analysis of interviews and field notes. The constant comparative method compares "one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 30). Data are then grouped based on similar qualities and assigned a category to identify patterns or themes within the data. Each theme was combined with similar themes to avoid redundancy with the aim of constructing the experiences of elite Paralympic athletes and employees at Lakeshore Foundation and its U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Ethnographic content analysis was used during document analysis to "document and understand the communication of meaning" with the aim to be systematic in evaluating the information (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). Ethnographic content analysis of documents allowed the researcher to create a topical guide to organizing the data collected in the documents. Data collection and analysis were executed concurrently to avoid overwhelming amounts of data to be analyzed as well as to enhance the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam, 1998).

Delimitations

The primary delimitation for this study was the choice to explore the environment at Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham and not the three existing Olympic Training Centers or the 10 other U.S. Olympic Training Sites or U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites. Therefore,

this study's findings were presented within the scope of one training site, its employees, and the experiences of two of the three teams that claim Lakeshore their training site home.

An additional delimitation is the use of the term "disability." Disability is an encompassing term with multiple meanings, but in this context was defined using Coakley's (2009) definition as the socially constructed constraints placed upon people with impairments, present when "accommodations in social or physical contexts are not or cannot be made to allow the full participation of people with functional limitations" (p. 50). For the purpose of this study, disability only referred to physical disability. It is acknowledged by the researcher that disability includes multiple facets of impairment. However, Lakeshore Foundation only serves people with physical disabilities, and therefore the decision was made to use disability only in reference to physical disabilities.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Lakeshore's Training Site Designation

The following section presents the findings with regard to the first research question focused on Lakeshore's process in becoming a designated training site. This section addresses training site requirements set forth by the USOC, Lakeshore's history and evolution from a rehabilitation hospital to a non-profit organization, and Lakeshore's training site proposal and was informed primarily by document analysis. Documents used to develop this narrative were outlined in the previous chapter. Citations are used sparingly in this section to allow for an uninterrupted narrative.

RQ1: How was Lakeshore Foundation designated as the first U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site?

Training Site Requirements

The USOC's protocol for applying for a site designation was outlined in an eight-page document entitled the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site Designation Plan, posted on its website and analyzed for this study (hereafter referred to as U.S. Designation Plan, 2010). The U.S. Designation Plan defined a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site as a "partnership between NGBs, the Local Operator, and the USOC to support and enhance elite training environments and host national and international competitions" (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, p. 2). The USOC designates training sites and training centers. A U.S. Olympic Training Center is owned and operated by the USOC, whereas a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site is an officially designated facility but not owned and operated by the USOC (USOC employee, personal communication, Jan. 12, 2012). Designation required a three-year business plan in

which the Local Operator, or site administration, outlined a detailed account of the organization's operating structure, background of the facility, and the community's experience hosting NGB events and programs (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010). The site designation plan required:

- audited/final budgets from the previous two years;
- a list of current partner organizations;
- letters of reference and/or recommendation from the NGB and local community leaders;
- training, competition, and event schedules; and
- a certificate of insurance complying with USOC and NGB requirements (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, p. 3).

Included in the business plan must be an explanation of NGB support and the Local Operator's ability to work with NGBs. More specifically, the USOC required an outline of funding, feeder programs such as youth programming for Olympic and Paralympic sport, sponsorship, support services such as medical, sport science, and strength and conditioning as well as daily needs such as housing and food, transportation plans, relationships with coaches, the reporting structure, and measureable outcomes and outputs of the program at the site (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010).

The USOC outlined the designation plan as a partnership among the USOC, the Local Operator, and NGBs. This research focused solely on the USOC and Local Operators. NGBs were not included in this research because the focus of this study was solely on Lakeshore Foundation's application to become a training site and the desires of Paralympic teams and coaches to train there; association with NGBs was beyond the scope other than the reference

letters included in Lakeshore's application for training site designation. As partners in a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site designation, the USOC agreed to provide the following:

- a staff liaison to communicate with the Local Operator;
- a routine program review;
- an annual conference for all site managers;
- use of the Olympic mark;
- assistance in facilitating sponsorship;
- acknowledgment on the USOC website; and
- recognition of the designation status and Olympic family ties within the site's local government and community leaders (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, p. 4).

The Local Operator, in turn, was required to provide the following:

- a business plan that included information on funding, feeder programs, support services, transportation, and quarterly reports;
- a plan for the training activity;
- facilities of international and world class caliber;
- sufficient space and storage, parking, and indoor sport and weight training facilities;
- adequate accessibility for persons with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- office facilities and equipment for NGB personnel and coaches;
- one full-time executive director for operations of the site;
- an ongoing liaison with relevant parks and recreation and sports commissions;
- a letter of understanding with the NGBs;

- measurable outcomes of the training; and
- insurance coverage of the facility (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, p. 5).

Additionally, the USOC detailed items that made existing training sites successful. The qualities that made those facilities a success were identified as:

- NGB integration and collaboration;
- community financial and organizational support from sports commissions and visitor's bureau;
- athlete services through education, activities, and career services;
- low-cost housing options;
- transportation availability;
- activities and entertainment options in the surrounding areas;
- strength and conditioning facilities;
- education opportunities and in-state grants;
- healthy food options;
- pre-existing elite-level coaches trained and certified by the NGBs;
- pre-existing sport culture;
- year-round, sport-specific training programs focused on long-term athlete development;
- young athletes feeding into the NGB national team systems from within the community;
- international competitions and exchanges;
- a grant writer;
- internships;
- a strong volunteer base;

- inclusion of government officials at events;
- support services such as sport science and medicine and/or partnerships with local hospitals and rehabilitation centers;
- support from the local media;
- athlete role models; and
- partnerships with local sports organizations (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, pp. 5-6).

With the criteria established in regard to what the USOC desired in a designated training site, it was important to explore how Lakeshore positioned itself into applying for training site designation.

Lakeshore History

Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital was a 100-bed rehabilitation hospital that served citizens of Birmingham, AL, until the administration shifted the organizational focus. Leadership recognized a pattern associated with the inpatient population of its clients where patients were discharged but returned within months because of their lack of physical activity upon leaving Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital. The hospital's executive director, Michael Stephens, recognized the reoccurring pattern as he had endured a spinal cord injury after a diving accident in 1970 and learned to walk again through intensive rehabilitation. Shortly after he was named executive director of the hospital in the mid-1970s, Stephens implemented a wheelchair basketball team to provide a recreation and physical activity component for Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital's patients. The hospital's physical activity program expanded to other sports in the mid-1980s and served the Birmingham community in addition to the hospital's inpatient population.

The campus environment surrounding Lakeshore's hospital was nonexistent as no other facilities supported physical activity aside from the hospital building. Stephens sought funding to assist in building athletic and recreation facilities on campus and approached then-Governor George Wallace with the financial request for the State of Alabama. Gov. Wallace, a former boxer, had just endured an assassination attempt and used a wheelchair. With Stephens's interest in assisting people with disabilities through physical activity, the governor's experiences provided a common ground for seeking state support for funding the addition of athletic and recreation facilities for Lakeshore.

As Lakeshore's physical activity program numbers grew and the organization expanded its facilities, the hospital administration decided to embrace a community-based program as its own organization. The administration circa 1980 formed Lakeshore Foundation, a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization to promote sport for people with disabilities from recreational through competitive levels. In establishing the new organization as the home of the non-clinical programs in physical activity, the Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital facility was leased to a local medical corporation. Therefore, the hospital continued to operate and began providing consistent income for the newly formed Lakeshore Foundation.

Congruent with the shift in focus for Lakeshore Foundation was recognition in the Paralympic movement in the late-1980s. Lakeshore Foundation's campus offered athletic facilities for athletes with disabilities to train, and employment opportunities for staff educated in addressing the needs of athletes with disabilities. Athletes with disabilities seeking to qualify for U.S. Paralympic teams began traveling to train at Lakeshore Foundation's athletic facilities, which at the time included one basketball court, a two-level fitness center offering moderately

sized workout space, and a therapy pool. Lakeshore Foundation responded to the interest by hosting training camps for athletes with disabilities, and athletes who trained at Lakeshore Foundation's facilities competed in the 1988 Paralympic Games in Seoul as well as the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona.

Lakeshore employees credited the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta as having a major impact on Lakeshore Foundation's athletic programming. With Alabama a border state to Georgia, Lakeshore Foundation offered a natural geographic location for athletes with disabilities to train. National teams from Bosnia, Sweden, and other countries conducted training camps at Lakeshore in addition to U.S. Paralympic hopefuls. The increase in training activity allowed Lakeshore to play the role as a regional organization that offered services to athletes with disabilities.

Interest in training at Lakeshore Foundation's facilities and use of its athlete services resulted in the organization exploring how it could better serve a growing base of athletes with disabilities in the United States who were interested in international competition. Lakeshore Foundation had successfully established recreational programs that served Birmingham residents with disabilities of all ages, offering competitive team sports and recreational physical activity classes. However, growth in Paralympic sport in the early 1990s resulted in Lakeshore administration evaluating how it could expand. Statistical data showing growth was captured in the application for training site designation (Application, 2000). From 1992 to 2000, U.S. Paralympic disabled sports organizations grew 41% and wheelchair sports grew by 252%. Between 1992 and 1997, amputee sport participant numbers grew by 326%. During that same timeframe, the Paralympic Games grew from 61 countries that competed in 1988 to 103

countries in 1996, a growth of 69%. With exponential growth in interest and participation, the number of athletes with disabilities training at USOC facilities grew by 49% from 1997 to 1998 alone. Lakeshore Foundation's administration recognized the growth of sport for people with disabilities, and examined how it could serve the expanding population.

Training Site Proposal

Lakeshore Foundation developed plans at the end of the 1990s to build additional athletic and recreational facilities on its campus, expanding its single basketball court, pool, and small fitness center. Plans called for a 126,000-square-foot multi-purpose recreational center with three basketball courts, a track, multiple pools, an indoor shooting range, and an accessible fitness center (Application, 2000). Lakeshore administration also began conversations with the USOC about being designated as an official training site. "Our homework told us that being a training site would potentially open doors for funding, certainly raise the image, not only of the foundation, but of the community," said Employee 5. Lakeshore administration began the process to apply for training site designation in 1998, seeking to capitalize on the additional exposure and opportunities to serve athletes with physical disabilities. Instability within the USOC's administration, however, delayed the application process.

When Lakeshore initiated discussions for becoming a training site, Dick Schultz was the USOC's executive director and William Hybl was the organization's volunteer president. However, allegations of bribery between the International Olympic Committee and Salt Lake City's organizing committee that submitted a bid to host the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games resulted in a reorganization of the USOC. Norman Blake was named USOC chief executive officer in 2000, a newly created position within the organization positioned

above the organization's executive director in the organizational chart. Blake, however, resigned from the position after 10 months of service and a six-year period of inconsistent leadership followed with four different people holding the title of CEO and four different people holding the title of president or chairman of the board of trustees (see Table 1 in Appendix).

> I mean, it was a crazy time. I think I know at least one of those CEOs came here and he said, 'This is great. We just need to do this.' And we're going, good, this is a great conversation, and six months later that guy's gone and we had to start over. I don't think it was ever about Lakeshore. There was no reason for it to be about Lakeshore. But it was about [the fact that] their whole organization was under fire. – Employee 5

Lakeshore employees and administration recognized that the delayed process was not necessarily the result of the USOC's hesitancy to designate a training site. The organization had to get itself in order first before addressing its commitment to Paralympic sport within the United States. Once that occurred, Lakeshore Foundation proceeded with its application to be designated as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

In February 2000, Lakeshore Foundation submitted its formal application to the USOC to be designated as a training site. The document was entitled "Application to The United States Olympic Committee for Paralympic Training Site Designation for Basketball, Tennis, Rugby, Shooting Sports, Swimming and Weightlifting, February 2000" (hereafter referred to as Application, 2000). Lakeshore offered a "win-win proposition, and enhancement of training opportunities for Paralympic athletes" in its application, seeking to promote common ground between Lakeshore's mission and the mission of the USOC (Application, 2000, p. 3). The application stated that, "what we seek in return is not monetary, but a formal USOC designation

as a Paralympic training facility" (Application, 2000, p. 3). In fact, Lakeshore's application documented it was recognized as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization and revealed its financial statements from the two fiscal years prior to submitting the application (see Table 2 in Appendix). Lakeshore's application focused on the facilities and services it offered for athletes with physical disabilities: "Lakeshore would make available to USOC its facilities, training staff, and various other resources related to preparing athletes and teams for Paralympic competition" (Application, 2000, p. 3). Lakeshore's application to the USOC addressed the facilities and athlete services it could provide without financial assistance, but also emphasized its ability to relieve the USOC from its growing commitment to serve both Olympians and Paralympians.

> So it's perfectly consistent with our mission to be a training site. Frankly, we felt we were giving the USOC a great opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the Paralympic side of the house by having us introduce one of their training sites with a real strong focus and expertise in Paralympic sport. – Employee 5

The Lakeshore administration and application portrayed that the training site designation would assist the USOC in offering services to its Olympians and Paralympians. Therefore, the tone of the application positioned the applicant as assisting the USOC in serving athletes rather than asking the USOC for its blessing to be recognized internationally.

Facilities. Proof of world-class facilities was among the requests by the USOC for training site designation. Lakeshore's application for training site designation detailed its plan for expanding facilities on its campus, and observations supported those plans after they were executed.

Public space. Lakeshore's training site application described public spaces within its overview of facilities, focusing on the accessibility of common areas such as the fieldhouse lobby, the Lakeshore administrative offices, and the athlete dormitories.

Fieldhouse. Lakeshore's plan called for a three-court fieldhouse with a three-lane, 200-meter Mondo track, "designed with the wheelchair user in mind, a feature that truly differentiates our facilities from comparable arenas designed for able-bodied sports" (Application, 2000, p. 6). The fieldhouse was planned to have 22 feet between each court and 30 feet between the baseline and walls for wheelchair users to have mobility and for hosting multiple events simultaneously, and observations supported that open space between courts made for accessibility and flexibility in configuration (Application, 2000). Center Court was surrounded by a retractable thick curtain hanging from the ceiling to offer moderate privacy if used.

Natatorium. The natatorium was planned to include a 25-meter, four-lane competition pool as well as a therapeutic pool, "fully accessible and designed around the user with disability" (Application, 2000, p. 7). The therapeutic pool was to offer multiple entrances into the water with stairs on the right side of the pool, ladders surrounding both pools, and a ramped entranceway to the therapeutic pool that was located between the two pools.

Fitness area. Among the other facility areas Lakeshore highlighted in its application was its fitness area, which was scheduled to feature adapted weightlifting equipment and machines. The fitness area was planned to be on the lower level left of the stairs and adjacent to an open hallway with a half-wall to separate fitness equipment from accessible locker room entrances. The reception desk was planned to be accessible as well as the workout machines in the space surrounding the desk, including bicycle machines, upper-body handcycle machines, lower-body

muscle building machines, free weights, and low padded tables behind the desk to allow for stretching or exercises.

Research and education. Lakeshore's application described a research and education area, consisting of office space on the lower level just past the fitness area with a laboratory, library, and multipurpose classroom. Within the area was a machine called a BOD POD used to test body composition of athletes. A separate training area was located on the top level of the fieldhouse, at the corner of the facility with rooms that branch from the main gym area near Court 3. The training area was space for athletic trainers, massage therapists, and other medicine professionals, according to the Lakeshore application (Application, 2000).

Shooting range. On the lower level of the fieldhouse beyond the research and education area was the indoor shooting range. The room contained a 10-lane air rifle and pistol range that allowed space for shooting and an indoor archery program. The shooting area was designed with accessibility for wheelchair users in mind. Office space was located behind the shooting area. Lakeshore purchased a $3,000 firearm for shooters with visual impairments. The gun beeped when the shooter aimed toward a target, and the beeping allowed the shooter to know how accurate he or she was. Equipment such as the firearm for shooters with visual impairments and the BOD POD, as well as training and research, displayed how Lakeshore planned for its application to be put into action through services and equipment for elite athletes with disabilities.

Housing. Finally, the application briefly mentioned plans for a "40-bed dormitory style structure on our campus convenient to food service and the training facility" (Application, 2000, p. 8). No further information on housing was provided within the application.

The Lakeshore facilities were detailed in the training site application, providing a sense of the structural environment within the organization. The application requirements emphasized how a site must provide world-class facilities and ensure they are accessible. Lakeshore's application described the facilities in detail to portray its efforts to serve athletes as a training site.

Services. The USOC cited a feeder system for young athletes to be exposed to Paralympic sport and NGB national teams as a quality of successful training sites, and Lakeshore pledged to provide that service through its competitive teams and youth programming. Lakeshore's application stated it would:

- provide facilities and an environment ideally suited to the training of the athlete with disability;
- give Paralympic athletes access to coaches and trainers experienced in preparing athletes for the highest levels of competition;
- apply information gathered through the Lakeshore Foundation Research and Education Program to guide training based on sound research and scientific principles; and
- utilize all of our resources to gather and share information that will not only help the athlete of today, but will also set the stage for even higher levels of performance in the future (Application, 2000, p. 22).

Lakeshore demonstrated it was adhering to all four of the pledges through facility use and coaching and training as previously described. With regard to the research and education program, goalball athletes cited the creation of training tests and goal-setting for their increased success at the 2008 Paralympic Games. One athlete who formerly worked at Lakeshore and a

Lakeshore trainer created a training regimen for the national team and testing mechanisms to employ during their training camps. The testing results provided the head coach with evidence of whether an athlete had improved, as well as documentation for selecting team members for the Paralympic Games.

Lakeshore's training site application cited its history and dedication to success in competitive sports, and at the time of the application submission boasted having 21 Paralympic and internationally accomplished athletes who trained at Lakeshore, including three former Paralympians who were on staff at the time (Application, 2000). Twenty-four athletes who were contenders to make the 2000 U.S. Paralympic team at the time the application was submitted were involved in Lakeshore's programming (Application, 2000).

Lakeshore advertised its competitive teams in the training site application. The document stated that Lakeshore's wheelchair rugby team had experienced international success, and Canadian and Australian teams trained at Lakeshore's facilities as well. The wheelchair basketball team was praised for its national success, while Lakeshore promoted itself as a training location for Paralympic teams. Additionally, the application mentioned specifically the tennis program, facility, and tennis professional, the shooting sports program and its international success, the swimming program's expansion to national prominence, and the weightlifting team's individual accomplishments.

The training site application did not require evidence of a youth feeder system where young athletes trained alongside Paralympians, although the later-published qualities of successful training sites offered such a pairing as ideal. Observations and interviews revealed that Lakeshore's focus on Paralympic sport shifted some of its resources away from recreational

programming, but it resulted in an integrated environment between Paralympic training and youth programming.

> The recreation piece has not slipped. That is the feeder program to Paralympics, we believe. Finding that new person and keeping those introductory sport and rec programs going and growing is what's going to feed into Paralympic teams eventually to some degree. – Employee 4

One example was the evening prior to the U.S. wheelchair basketball team's tryout, when two youth wheelchair basketball teams and one adult wheelchair basketball team conducted practice. One girl who played for the older youth team appeared to socialize with the U.S. basketball team members, talking to one athlete who competes on the national team and works full-time at Lakeshore as the coach of the competitive youth wheelchair basketball teams. The connection the Lakeshore employee provided between the youth teams and the U.S. national team offered a bridge for the young girl to connect with Paralympic role models, one of the 22 qualities the USOC deemed for a successful training site.

The integrated training techniques and connecting the youth programming with the national team through the Lakeshore employee/youth head coach was one example of Lakeshore offering a feeder system and exposure to Paralympic athletes. Athletes were not necessarily funneled through the organization's youth teams and on to the national teams, but rather the integration provided exposure for the younger athletes to be mentored and acknowledged by world-class competitors and coaches. The resulting environment fostered competition, potentially increasing the level of Paralympic performance, a goal offered by Lakeshore in its application.

Paralympic and Olympic service. Lakeshore closed its application by acknowledging the lack of appropriate training sites in the United States and offering to assist the USOC with its growing obligation to serve Olympians and Paralympians.

> Indications are that the International Paralympic movement is interested in building its programs, including training facilities. Dr. Bob Steadward, IPC president, recently was quoted as saying, "The IPC is trying to identify major centers around the world that could provide leadership for the development of sports for persons with disability." It is our view that our proposal to the USOC provides a great opportunity to step up the level of Paralympic training in this country without impacting the support of the Olympic movement. Our intent is not to replace the services provided by the USOC, but to augment efforts to provide better coaching and training practices in the Paralympic movement. In partnership with the USOC, we believe we can assist in efforts that truly parallel those advancements experienced in the Olympic movement over the past 50 years. (Application, 2000, p. 21)

Again, the wording of the closing arguments portrayed Lakeshore as doing the USOC a favor by offering to become a training site. At the time of the application, the USOC had five designated training sites, none of which were focused on Paralympic sport (USOC employee, personal communication, Jan. 12, 2012). The negotiations between Lakeshore and the USOC moved forward amid the unstable leadership at the USOC; however, as negotiations progressed, the request for designation changed.

Lakeshore's initial application was for Paralympic Training Site designation. The USOC Board of Directors, in 2002, offered Lakeshore the designation as a U.S. Paralympic Training

Site. Lakeshore administration considered the offer and rejected it. “At the time, the USOC wasn’t connecting the rings to the Paralympic side of the house. We felt the Paralympic athlete … ought to have the right to train under the rings,” said Employee 5. Further negotiations gave way to the USOC recognizing that Lakeshore Foundation fulfilled the USOC’s definition of a U.S. Olympic Training Site while focusing on Paralympic athletes. The USOC’s website explained the mission of designated training sites as defined by the organization.

> The mission of the U.S. Olympic Training Sites is to access additional resources, services and facilities for athletes and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) while providing an elite athlete training environment that positively impacts performance. Those training centers that have received the U.S. Olympic Training Site designation, have invested millions in facility, operating, staffing, equipment and athlete training costs. (U.S. Designation Plan, 2010, p. 2)

Lakeshore’s training site application explained its investment in providing an elite athlete training environment, although its target of stakeholders were Paralympians. “… [O]nce they saw that, hey, we’re wanting to take on some of the Paralympic responsibilities at no cost to you, then I think that really helped us …” Employee 1 said. The differences in facilities and services provided by training sites were significant but not explained in the USOC’s definition of a training site; therefore, the USOC designated Lakeshore as the first U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site in February 2003.

Lakeshore’s website explained, from the organization’s perspective, why it was selected as the first training site with an Olympic and Paralympic designation.

> Lakeshore earned this unique designation because of its long history of contributions to athletics for individuals with physical disabilities; its world-class facilities designed specifically to meet the needs of athletes with physical disabilities, while also accommodating able-bodied athletes; and due to the superior training and experience of Lakeshore Foundation staff. (Lakeshore Foundation, n.a.h, § Lakeshore Foundation and the Paralympic Games)

The three-fold reason Lakeshore provided for being designated a training site addressed the major areas of its original application in 2000. The USOC employee who participated in this study stated that the missions of both the USOC and Lakeshore Foundation were similar, and that was the reason for developing partnerships. "Ultimately, I think it's about really trusting who you are working with and building that relationship so that you feel it's going to be a win-win. It's going to be great for our athletes. It's good for the USOC," said USOC 1. Lakeshore employees had similar comments about the partnership. "It's a win-win for the USOC and Lakeshore. We don't get money from the USOC, but the honor and privilege of carrying those rings and carrying that designation … I think it's a mutual benefit," said Employee 4. The positive for Lakeshore was that earning the training site designation added credibility to its operation and service to athletes with disabilities, particularly since the designation included the Olympic rings and set a precedent for two other sites to receive Olympic and Paralympic Training Site designation by 2012. Designating Lakeshore as a training site created an official training location for U.S. Paralympic teams and athletes to receive personal attention and service like their Olympian peers, topics addressed in response to Research Question 2.

Athlete and Team Motivation

The following section addresses the findings with regard to the second research question.

RQ2: Why do Paralympic athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore Foundation?

Lakeshore's website stated that competitive teams train at Lakeshore because they are "drawn here by the Foundation's barrier-free athletic complex, experienced staff, and by our long-standing commitment to expand opportunities for those who have experienced a physical disability" (Lakeshore Foundation, n.d.b, para. 2). Data revealed that elite athletes with disabilities and elite teams choose to train at Lakeshore Foundation because of three themes similar to those described on the website: facility accessibility, personal attention, and a focus on Paralympic sport (see Table 3 in Appendix). The findings were informed by interviews, observations, and document analysis, with the narrative blending the data.

Facility Accessibility

An athlete for the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team rolled out of the on-campus dormitory's lobby, through the silent automatic sliding doors, and onto the smooth sidewalk of Lakeshore Foundation's parking lot. She gave her chair a few stern pushes, cruised onto the asphalt lot and then past two full rows of accessible parking spaces before rolling directly by the groomed shrubbery and into the entrance of Lakeshore's main building, where two more automatic doors slid open and her wheelchair coasted in without so much as navigating a single bump or doorway lip. The entire trip took less than two minutes. Inside, she went directly past the left side of the reception desk, where the aroma of chlorine from the downstairs pools filled the commons area. She pressed the automatic door button for the entrance into the fieldhouse,

and wheeled across the baseline of three basketball courts and a blue Mondo-surface track to meet up with a couple of teammates.

The main area of the fieldhouse saw most of the action during the weekend as the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team conducted its Paralympic tryout camp, cutting its 18-member roster down to 12. The modern architecture of the fieldhouse exterior with sharp lines and glass mixed with brick was mirrored inside with bright lighting, clean and tan court surfaces that glowed from wax, and a blue track surface that appeared new to the untrained eye. In its application to be designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site in 2000, Lakeshore Foundation cited its planned $22 million facilities expansion "to create the nation's finest athletic complex dedicated and designed specifically to sports, recreation, and fitness for people with disabilities. It is our hope that the training center will serve as a model for others in the future" (Application, 2000, p. 4). Lakeshore had $15 million secured at the time of the application with plans to raise an additional $5 million through a capital campaign (Application, 2000). The following two sections address Lakeshore's accessible facilities with regard to athletics and lodging.

Athletic facilities. The recommendation letters from NGBs included in Lakeshore's application to be designated a training site acknowledged the need for accessible facilities for elite athlete training. Edward J. Suhr, president of the U.S. Quad Rugby Association (the official name for wheelchair rugby), wrote:

> … [T]here are very few accessible facilities to hold large events such as National Championships, Paralympic tryouts, and training camps. Having reviewed Lakeshore's plans for the new complex, I foresee it filling part of this void and setting a standard for others to follow. (Application, 2000, p. 18)

More than 10 years later, Paralympic athletes and coaches said the accessible facilities were among the reasons they chose to regularly train at Lakeshore Foundation. Lakeshore's fieldhouse, for example, has automatic door entrances at two locations and the floor to enter the fieldhouse has no door lip that would result in a bump for wheelchairs. The hardwood basketball courts are flat with the surrounding track surface, which is also the same grade as the rubber-like flooring surrounding the track. Accessible facilities, in fact, resulted in Lakeshore hosting major competitions for athletes with disabilities and becoming the home base for U.S. women's goalball, U.S. women's wheelchair basketball, and U.S. quad rugby, thus filling a void that athletes and coaches said was present with training facilities beyond Lakeshore.

Athletes noted that the spacious athletic facility with three courts was an advantage while training at Lakeshore as opposed to other locations. "Coming to Lakeshore, the facilities are absolutely top notch. I mean, yeah, we play on a basketball court when any basketball court could work. But their facility here is awesome," said Athlete 2. The athlete pointed out the extra effort by the Lakeshore staff to ensure the facility is prepared for the team's training camp. "It's a good floor. It's consistent. They manage the noise. Again, they just have a lot of attention to detail with our sport," said Athlete 2. The large facility and small amount of athlete traffic during the training camps prevented the overcrowded experience that athletes had at other training locations. Other training locations such as the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado

Springs, CO, did not offer the same experience, according to athletes and coaches. “It’s kind of nice here, too, that we have three courts to work on. When you go somewhere else, you end up having to incorporate several gyms so you’re traveling to different locations from your hotel,” said Athlete 4. Athletes said use of all three courts simultaneously allowed coaches to expand their practice planning rather than condensing players onto one court, no matter the sport. When one of the teams trained at Colorado Springs, however, athletes said the focus shifted away from meeting the team’s needs due to the large number of Olympic and Paralympic athletes who trained there. “Again, two great facilities, but a smaller focus at Lakeshore, and that’s the difference. It’s just you. You’re not fighting anyone to get gym space here (Lakeshore),” said Athlete 2.

Observations of Lakeshore’s fieldhouse supported athletes’ claims as teams had the opportunity to comfortably spread across two or three courts, depending upon the training they conducted at a given time. Oftentimes during the training sessions, a court was left open and unused, which Lakeshore employees said allowed for general membership to use the space if not used by the national team. It should be noted, however, that the decision of whether to use two or three courts was left to the Paralympic team’s coaching staff and not dictated by the Lakeshore employees. The contrast was seen on Thursdays prior to the training camps beginning, when all three courts were in full use from approximately 1 p.m. until 10 p.m. either by Lakeshore’s competitive teams or by members shooting basketball. However, the first day of training camp for goalball and wheelchair basketball were different in that Lakeshore members were not inside the facility unless to walk the track quietly while the teams conducted their respective training camps.

Colorado Springs and other Olympic Training Centers at Lake Placid, NY, and Chula Vista, CA, were unable to offer isolated training environments to Paralympic teams, according to athletes and coaches. For a sport such as basketball, condensing to a single court as opposed to three courts may result in practice being more congested considering that no less than 12 athletes may be on the floor. The environment for the sport was chaotic in that athletes were yelling to each other during scrimmages, calling plays and defensive sets. Even in practice, the team preferred loud music played across the facility's speakers, and Lakeshore employees complied. For a sport such as goalball, however, isolation of the court is imperative. The sport requires silence as athletes have visual impairments and depend upon the ringing noise in the ball to play the game. For example, when goalball trained at Lakeshore's Center Court, the other courts were closed and activity inside the fieldhouse was minimized to walking the track. Signage was posted on the doors leading into the fieldhouse requesting silence for the Paralympic team, and Lakeshore's membership was notified in advance of the team's training camp, goalball rules, and why silence was essential to the sport.

When the team traveled to Colorado Springs to train, the facility offered side-by-side courts but employees did not shut down the entire facility for one team's practice. "Even though they had five gyms on the complex, we couldn't use any of them. So we housed, we ate, we did all that stuff at Colorado Springs, then we'd have to get in a van and drive over to (a local school)," said Coach 1. The coach's comments shed light on an advantage of Lakeshore's campus having athletic facilities, dining space, and dormitories within close proximity of each other, a sentiment that was echoed by athletes.

> Yeah, we really couldn't ask for much more because everything is so close and with tryouts, especially, we go and have a three-hour training session and then we have a limited amount of down time. And in that time we have to get treatment and eat and try to get some rest. Having everything close together is just a huge benefit for us. – Athlete 4

The benefit of having Lakeshore employees cater to on-court needs such as music or silence in addition to having facilities in close proximity reinforced the environmental attributes of service quality, not focusing on one particular quality (e.g., structural facilities) but on the holistic quality (e.g., experiencing the environment as one unit). The comments led to Lakeshore's campus being confined to a small area that reduces travel time between facilities for training, eating, or sleeping.

Living space. Lakeshore Foundation's campus dormitory began as a hospital wing that was used to house athletes in residency or during training camps. Dining services also were held at the old dormitory facility, offering hospital food such as cheeseburgers and fries to athletes for meals. However, upon being designated a training site, athletes voiced and Lakeshore administration recognized that the accommodations did not meet the standards needed and desired. "One of the things we found out after we got our designation is that our housing was not adequate for the type of housing the athletes needed," said Employee 5. Lakeshore renovated the dormitory and dining area as recent as 2009. Hilton Hotels and Resorts donated cash and in-kind services for the renovation, and the company was recognized with photos and plaques inside the refurbished facility. A dining area and kitchen space was installed in the dormitory, staffed with cooks to provide in-house meals as opposed to contracting through the hospital on campus. "We complained about the food being too heavy. … And now you have a salad, and if you have food

allergies they make you special meals. So those would've been my biggest things and they've been completely applied and fixed," said Athlete 5. Several athletes who had long histories of training at Lakeshore identified the request for better food, and nearly all athletes and coaches said Lakeshore's food and housing was ideal for their needs and desires.

Overhauling the dormitory and dining services, however, was not conducted without consultation of Lakeshore's stakeholders, athletes with disabilities. The new facility was designed for wheelchair users, and people with disabilities were consulted in the design to provide proper accessibility, which included visual contrasts in lighting and spatial concerns within the floor plan. As an example, dim lighting in the hallways, controlled lighting inside the dorm rooms, and colored tile marking doorways addressed accessibility needs for people with visual impairments. One alteration suggested by a Lakeshore employee at the time and not executed was smooth walls for "trailing," which is when a person with a visual impairment uses his or her hand as a guide along the wall.

Other accessibility components built into the design included wider doorways beyond the ADA-mandated 36-inch opening. The facility design team installed 40-inch wide doorways to accommodate for sport wheelchairs which typically have negative-cambered wheels that are wider than traditional wheelchairs. Additionally, the tables in the dining area offered the ability to reconfigure the layout, and the food service line was constructed low to give wheelchair users the opportunity to better evaluate menu choices. Athletes and coaches noted the attention to detail with regard to Lakeshore's service through its facility design.

> We carry tape measures with us when we go on these site visits (prior to training camps). Can we get in the doors? Are we going to be able to get in the showers? Are we going to be able to go in the door to go to the bathroom? Is there enough turn space in there? Those are a lot of things that an able-bodied person doesn't think about or even have the care to think about. In our sport, that's a significant thing for our team. – Coach 3

Facility accessibility, as noted by the athletes and coaches, was an essential component not for a better choice of training facility but to provide manageable activities of daily living. Lakeshore's recognition of its stakeholders' needs was a component that attracted the teams to return to an environment based on consistency and reliability. The accessibility components, however, were not accentuated but rather integrated within the design. "They have complete accessibility for all disabilities here, and I think all training centers should, across the board. Not just, hey, there's a special room or a special wing, you know?" said Athlete 2. Integration of accessibility, as opposed to establishing an accessible area, as Athlete 2 suggested, became a point of concern at other training sites and centers.

At Colorado Springs, athletes said they were often segregated among different floors in the training center's dormitory. Athletes who used wheelchairs were assigned ground-floor rooms, whereas able-bodied athletes were often assigned to a room on a different floor to preserve the first-floor accessible rooms. "There's no elevators, so we end up getting stuck up on the second floor, so we get kind of split up, which happens a lot at other places," said Athlete 4. The segregation became an issue when ambulatory athletes such as Athlete 4 and wheelchair users competed on the same team and the housing design required splitting the team during its stay on-site. Ambulatory athletes said the main contention with segregating the rooms was that it

made communication among teammates and with the coaching staff difficult when plans changed during the training camps.

Athletes said Lakeshore's commons area inside the dormitory offered a meeting location during down time of the training camps, but that accessibility of the space was what made Lakeshore unique with regard to its living space. For example, two computers in the commons area were equipped with accessible software for people with visual impairments. Additionally, Lakeshore administration recognized the opportunity to offer specialized service through the arrangements of the facilities, according to the athletes and coaches. For example, the Lakeshore employee who managed the dining and dormitory arranged the dining area's cooler identically each time the goalball team held a training camp, which allowed athletes to know where specific products were located based on memory. One athlete with a visual impairment noted that Coke Zero was always on the second shelf down on the right side of the cooler. "It's stuff like that where (Lakeshore employee) just does a really nice job of thinking through that kind of stuff and what makes sense, you know, and consistently," said Athlete 3. The consistency of simple product placement eased the mind of athletes and coaches when it came to everyday nuances people with disabilities face. "It's just easy here. We've been other places that have been great because they're in great places, but there's a lot of headaches, too. There's no headaches here," said Coach 4. The lack of headaches, according to Lakeshore employees, stems from facilities designed with accessibility at the forefront of planning. "If you are a wheelchair user or, really, if your disability has any mobility aspect to it, it's an easy place to navigate. Everything here is designed with access in mind," said Employee 5.

Lakeshore employees said the organization sought training site designation, at first, because of the accessible facilities the organization offered. Athletes and coaches said Lakeshore was primarily known internationally for its accessible facilities. However, as Lakeshore employees mentioned, the designation of being a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site was more than offering world-class facilities. It included offering personal attention and athlete services, which emerged as another theme for why elite athletes and teams trained at Lakeshore.

Personal Attention

The basketball court was ringing with screeching tires and yells from the women's basketball team as players scrimmaged five-on-five at Lakeshore's Center Court. Seated at a table along the sideline were the team leader typing on a computer, a Lakeshore trainer that the team contracted, and an assistant coach for the team making notations on a clipboard. Everyone was dressed in navy blue t-shirts with a USA team logo on it, even the Lakeshore employee serving as a trainer for the team. The team leader wore jeans, but the rest of the contingency, including two other assistant coaches on the opposite sideline with the head coach, wore track pants or shorts with sneakers. Lakeshore Foundation's president slowly walked onto the sideline sipping from a cup of coffee in his left hand and clasping a white paper in his right hand. He wore khaki dress pants, dress shoes, a pressed white collared shirt and a necktie, making him noticeably different from the rest of the fieldhouse personnel. He watched the court intently, following the action as if he were evaluating the play. He checked the clock above the basketball rim. One of the basketball players came off the court for a rest, and he talked with her briefly as she drank water. They both continued to watch the scrimmage.

The athletes and coaches knew the president and were aware that he came to watch them scrimmage. His presence, according to them, was not unusual during training camps. "(He) usually comes out almost all the time. You're not going to see that at most of the training centers. The CEO is not going to come out and say, 'Hey, what's up,'" said Athlete 3. In contrast, athletes said that at most other training sites and centers, the athletic trainers who worked there did not know their names. While the athletes noted the impression it made on them that the Lakeshore president was interested in their training camp, USOC employees, coaches, and other Lakeshore employees acknowledged that the personal attention toward athletes at Lakeshore was a characteristic of the organization's culture and why teams trained there.

> Well, I definitely think they choose Lakeshore because, to me, it's like their home away from home. Lakeshore provides a very comfortable environment where they really take care of the athletes. So I think it's an environment people really enjoy because they feel welcome, they feel important, they feel valued. And I think Lakeshore has done a really good job of making the athletes feel that way. – USOC 1

Comments from coaches supported the USOC employee's observations. "Just overall, we know that we're going to be treated very, very well here. Lakeshore has made a commitment to this team, and we've been told we're one of their priority groups," said Coach 3. Lakeshore employees noted the personal attention shown toward athletes and teams centered on making their visit to the training site as productive as possible. "They're here and they're focused on one thing, and that's to train … We just try to make it as productive as possible for them while they're here," said Employee 2. The desire to make the environment comfortable related back to

Lakeshore's original wording in its application to be designated a training site that was inclusive and accepting.

Environmental attribute. It was important to note how Lakeshore positioned itself with regard to providing personal attention to athletes through the environmental attribute of service quality. Lakeshore's focus on personal attention of athletes with physical disabilities was outlined in its application to be designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

> If our country is to truly excel in the International Paralympic Games, as well as in other world championships, we must offer complete, consistent, and ongoing training opportunities. We must also continue to develop new Paralympians. We must increase our understanding of sports science for athletes with disabilities, so that we can combine practical training experience with sound scientific principals [*sic*]. – Application, 2000, p. 4)

The Lakeshore application reinforced its history of providing coaches, trainers, and experienced staff to offer a full-service facility for athletes with disabilities. The organization highlighted its commitment to research and education for athletes with disabilities "on a scale unlike other efforts," further stating that "[s]cientists around the world have confirmed that this component of our program is an essential element missing in current training for these athletes" (Application, 2000, p. 4). The employees reinforced Lakeshore's message of providing a full-service training facility while understanding the needs of its population. "We were named Paralympic because of our ability to understand athletes with physical disabilities and what those needs are," said Employee 4. Lakeshore's application and its employees touted the dedication to service quality attributes for athletes and Paralympic teams. In turn, the teams recognized that focus on service

quality, citing how Lakeshore's environment made them feel comfortable. "It's a comfortable environment, and it's comfortable because you can rely on it. You know what you're going to get out of it," said Coach 2. Athletes recognized the sacrifices of bypassing training centers like Colorado Springs to seek the advantages Lakeshore offered. "I would say it feels a little bit more that you're being acknowledged by the USOC when you go to those training sites, but here is where we're most comfortable. We can do the things that our team does," said Athlete 5. That reliability offered by Lakeshore employees built upon the consistent environment athletes and coaches noted with regard to accessible facilities and the teams' ability to achieve success without distraction.

Consistency and comfort were two qualities that athletes and coaches cited as influences on their Paralympic success. "… [F]or us having a place where we're comfortable, where we can go and build ourselves as players, build ourselves as a team, get in, get out, do our business, I think it contributes greatly to our success," said Athlete 5. Athletes and coaches credited that consistency in environment and treatment as a reason for improving performance in competition. One of the teams that earned a silver medal at the 2004 Paralympic Games began training at Lakeshore shortly thereafter and won the gold medal at the 2008 Paralympic Games.

> … [H]ands down, I think it was the difference between silver and gold for sure. We were probably a more talented team in '04 to be honest. In '04 we came close and got a silver. But there's a difference between '04 and '08 and Lakeshore wasn't everything, but it was a hell of a lot to do with it … which I think speaks volumes on why we came here. Because from a convenience and from a financial standpoint, Colorado Springs would've been cheaper and a lot, you know, less expensive. – Athlete 3

The athletes' and coaches' praise of Lakeshore's effect on their success supported the organization's initial pledge that a training site designation would improve the U.S. Paralympic teams' performances. "Through more training, U.S. teams will be more competitive, addressing the dissatisfaction among many in this country over our overall performance in Atlanta, 1996" (Application, 2000, p. 4). Athletes specifically cited the crowded training sites at other locations as a distraction as opposed to the smaller, more intimate environment Lakeshore offered where the staff and programming focused on the single team there to train. "You're not contending with other athletes to get similar services. You're the focus. That's a big difference, being the focus. It really can make a difference in your performance," said Athlete 2. While athletes previously mentioned crowded gym space at other locations, others specifically referenced the personal attention shown by Lakeshore's dining services and how even avoiding large crowds during meal time allowed the team to focus on training. Still, much of the contention toward other locations stemmed from them not treating athletes as a priority.

> Lakeshore has always been very accommodating for our team. From everything from testing to gym time we're treated first priority here as opposed to other bigger training sites where we won't get testing we need, we won't get this or that we need. We're very much, you know, the stepchild of it. So we've always come here because they've always given us basically what we want and what we needed to get done as a team. – Athlete 1

Coaches said the crowded facilities at locations like Colorado Springs were to be expected, but that priority and personal attention at those locations decreased over time. The decrease in personal attention affected the environmental attribute for the coaches and their athletes.

> If somebody got hurt, we'd have to take them back. Just small things like that. … To have anybody come out on the weekend to do anything—sports science, sports medicine, stuff like that—it was like, 'Hey, we've worked all week.' And I understand all that stuff. They've got a lot of other things going on, so we just didn't have that. I came down here (Lakeshore), and they're here all weekend for you. – Coach 1

Coaches explained how specific training needs were not met at Colorado Springs, which is considered a full-service training center as opposed to Lakeshore's status as a training site that is locally owned and operated. The USOC participant for this study said Lakeshore was, aside from the operations, essentially a training center rather than a site because of the services it offered to athletes. The USOC participant said full service included athletic training, sports science, and athlete services such as proper dining and residence halls. Contrary to that definition, coaches and athletes said those services were not fully offered to them at other locations, particularly when their needs conflicted with the needs of Olympic teams.

Employees at Lakeshore said their goal during a team's training camp was full service, particularly with regard to the environmental attribute. "Really, everything is about making the environment for the athlete as worry and hassle free so they can focus on training. Lakeshore has that history," said Employee 4. Employees said there was never an educational process that taught them about customer service or personal attention, but that the culture within Lakeshore was of a service mind-set and that other employees displayed it.

That service mind-set was common for Lakeshore employees with regard to scheduling for the Paralympic teams. Coaches said once the teams scheduled a training date, Lakeshore employees asked the coaches when they would like to schedule use of the facilities. Conversely,

the scheduling of court time at other locations was dictated by the training facility administration.

> … [T]heir commitment (Lakeshore's) to us, they back that up by saying, "When do you need to be here?" instead of, "Here are the time slots we have available when you can come in." There's a subtle difference between those two sentences, but a world of difference when you're trying to manage a team. To have them open their arms and welcome our team as a priority member for them, it makes it very easy. – Coach 3

Lakeshore employees said flexibility with facility use was a positive quality they could provide for teams focused on training for international competition.

> A team says, "We want to practice three hours in the morning, have a two-hour lunch break, three hours later," there are many places that would say, "Well, you can only practice here and then you can come back there and then be the last one on the court at night." That's not what they need. So I think from a training standpoint, we're able to give them time on the court. – Employee 4

Facility availability and flexibility in scheduling seemed easier for Lakeshore because it primarily served three U.S. national teams and a limited number of individual athletes with none in residency and living full-time on Lakeshore's campus to train. Conversely, training centers such as Colorado Springs served athletes and teams in residency in addition to the visiting athletes and teams.

An example of Lakeshore employees' service with regard to scheduling was the night before goalball's training camp began, when Lakeshore employees conducted physical fitness tests on the athletes to gauge their progress from the previous training camp. The fourth of five

tests was on Court 1 in the fieldhouse. A Lakeshore employee taped five vertical lines on the white retractable curtain that draped from the ceiling and surrounded Center Court. The athletes "trailed" the curtain to visualize how far apart the taped lines were; the floor had tape marks in the exact locations, mimicking a goalball floor's markings. Once ready, a whistle blew and the athletes side-stepped right until the last taped line, then left until the last taped line, working on their side-to-side agility and accuracy. The Lakeshore adult wheelchair basketball team was practicing on Court 1 but avoided the goalball athletes. Conflict arose when a Lakeshore employee began videoing the test with an iPad and stood under one of the baskets on Court 1. The employee then asked the basketball team to change courts and resume practice on Court 3, citing that the athletes needed silence to hear the whistle for the test. The basketball team members were not happy about moving, with one sarcastically asking, "What, the camera doesn't work on that end?" in reference to Court 3. Ironically, the goalball team finished its testing on Court 3, and the basketball team moved back to Court 1. The Lakeshore employee's actions to accommodate for the Paralympic team showed the organization's attempt to balance service with regard to the environmental attribute. Whereas the athletes and coaches praised Lakeshore for offering all three courts during their training camps, the employees in turn had to move recreational athletes to accommodate for the Paralympians.

In the goalball example, the environment allowed the basketball team to temporarily change practice courts within minutes and thus minimizing the inconvenience due to the facility's ability to accommodate and low demand for court time. Highlighted in that example, however, was the time commitment from Lakeshore employees to serve the Paralympic team's needs (e.g., videoing the tests) while minimizing the inconvenience of Lakeshore's teams.

> Sometimes people think of a training site as a place where you go and it's all about the facility. And what we've learned over time is that sometimes it's less about the facility and more about the athlete services. It's more about providing the proper diet and nutrition, proper meals. It's providing services such as sports psychology. It's providing athletic training services. … It gets down to trying to help the team identify what they need and then provide them with what they need. – Employee 5

Lakeshore's environmental attribute of service quality was impacted by facility accessibility, which was set forth by designers and the administrative team well before it was designated a training site. However, athletes, coaches, and employees highlighted the environmental attribute not just for the access offered by facilities, but for the ways in which the employees capitalized on that access.

> … [R]eally from the beginning Lakeshore looked at how can they serve the Olympic and Paralympic Movement by helping our athletes try to be the best they could be. What they did is they not just provided access to their facilities which are world class, but they have the support service to go with it. And that's really critical when you're looking at Paralympic athletes. – USOC 1

The USOC recognized that Lakeshore attempted to interweave environmental and functional attributes to create a holistic approach to serving its stakeholders.

Functional attribute. The functional attribute of service quality is consumers' perception of service employees during the service delivery. For Lakeshore Foundation, the functional attribute addressed how Lakeshore employees showed personal attention to athletes who trained at the facility. Athletes and coaches said the Lakeshore employees and the service

they provided was what made the training site unique just as much as its accessible facilities. "… [T]he staff makes us feel important and makes us feel like the Paralympians that we are where when we train at other places we're kind of just another face sort of thing," said Athlete 4. The personal investment in service quality was what athletes described with regard to knowing the athletes' and coaches' names and offering the full service that the USOC employee described with regard to environmental attributes.

One example was that the basketball team's arrival to Lakeshore coincided with one athlete's birthday, and the team held a late-night birthday party for her with cake and ice cream. Some of the Lakeshore employees attended as well, and one athlete said it was the Lakeshore employees who went off campus to purchase the cake. Other athletes noted the willingness of Lakeshore employees to address personal or team needs that may involve driving off campus. "… [I]t's very easy for our team to be here," said Coach 3 in reference to Lakeshore employees and their service toward the athletes and coaches. The coaches noted that Lakeshore employees who worked directly with the training site operation provided them with contact information so needs could be met during and after hours, a contrast to other training locations where coaches and athletes said few employees knew their names or left them to train without personal attention. The availability of the Lakeshore employees reflected the service-minded culture previously mentioned, to where they considered it their goal to make a training camp as easy as possible for visiting teams.

The functional attributes of service quality offered by the Lakeshore employees made a difference in overall experience for the athletes and coaches. "There are certain staff members here who would do anything for the athletes. It really shows," said Athlete 1. That dedication

was displayed by employees who said they followed the teams in international competition, even setting a 2 a.m. alarm to watch one of the team's competitions on the Internet. The relationship built between the athletes and the Lakeshore employees was evident in the personal attention shown toward the athletes.

> Right now, if you tell me goalball is coming, I know five things we need to do. We need to drop the temperature in the gym. We need to, you know, do this and do that and I can just lay out all the things that need to be done because that's what I've done for so long. I can tell you right off on the team we have two that are lactose intolerant. We have one that doesn't like mushrooms, one that's allergic to strawberries. – Employee 2

Basketball-specific equipment such as a shot clock was another example of Lakeshore employees and the functional attribute of service quality. The basketball team requested shot clocks for the courts during one of its first training camps at Lakeshore. The staff cooperated and allowed the coaches to control the clocks. Since that initial training camp, shot clocks were part of the training camp checklist for the basketball team and always provided. However, the coaches and athletes said that similar requests at other training locations were delayed as the on-site contact often called another employee to find the equipment, thus making the request useless considering the time it took for a resolution.

Service to athletes and coaches also included accommodating requests for which employees otherwise would not have been prepared. For example, one coaching staff at a previous training camp made a late request once his team had arrived to conduct a spin class with handcycles on Lakeshore's campus. When the athletes reported for their scheduled training session at the fieldhouse, the handcycles were in position outside and Lakeshore's regular

handcycle instructor taught the class. The impromptu change in scheduling was an example of how the Lakeshore employees served the team, according to the athletes.

Lakeshore employees' dedication to serving athletes and providing personal attention attracted teams to the training site. Athletes recognized that other locations such as Colorado Springs were crowded, thus making it more difficult for personal attention. For athletes with disabilities, personal attention may be deemed more important due to specific athletic needs and treatment.

> We, as a team, come here quite often so they get to know you by name. They get to know what your needs are. You go into an environment like Colorado Springs, it's much bigger. They're seeing hundreds of athletes every week, training camps, and I know a lot of teams go there. So they don't, they're not going to know who you are unless you're a resident. So of course that's a difference because you're having to explain disability and then what's going on with you. – Athlete 2

The re-introduction of disability to training staffs at places such as Colorado Springs was an inconvenience for the Paralympians, having to explain disabilities and needs each time they saw a trainer. The athletes said that the smaller environment at Lakeshore added a personal touch because the employees maintained a focus on Paralympic sport.

Focus on Paralympic Sport

Turning into the Lakeshore Foundation complex, the entranceway welcomed visitors with shrubbery and trees that surrounded a large rectangular stone sign with bold lettering: Lakeshore Foundation U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. The U.S. flag with Olympic rings was placed to the left of the lettering to let visitors know the campus on which they were

driving was stamped with the USOC's seal of approval. The landscaping made Lakeshore's grounds appear like a college campus setting with modern buildings located through the winding, two-lane passageway hidden amid a forest of trees. Although Lakeshore Foundation evolved from Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital, the campus as it appeared in 2012 offered no indication of its former life. Still, inside the main building that housed the fieldhouse and natatorium, a mixture of stakeholders appeared.

At the reception desk, senior adults checked in for an aquatics class and picked up their white, Lakeshore-issued towels. A mother and her son who used a wheelchair went past the desk toward the elevator near the rear of the lobby. Through the left doorway was the fieldhouse with three basketball courts and a three-lane track where the most activity occurred. Within the one large space, two courts contained youth wheelchair basketball practice and one court held youth goalball practice. The U.S. women's goalball team participated in athletic training tests prior to beginning their training camp the following day when the rest of the fieldhouse would be off limits to preserve the quiet rules associated with the game. The scene, observed two times, appeared to be representative of any given Thursday at Lakeshore Foundation, and Lakeshore employees told a nearly identical story without being prompted.

Employee 3: We may simultaneously within this building have a young child with cerebral palsy in a swim lesson and an 80-year-old who's had a stroke in a personal training session in the fitness area and youth competitive basketball team practicing and a Paralympic Training Camp going on.

Researcher: In one day?

Employee 3: Well, at the same time. The common denominator is physical activity for people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, but it has a lot of faces. It really is about providing opportunity for what's possible and sort of changing the expectation of what's possible. I think that's pretty amazing.

Employee 3's comments were representative of a transition Lakeshore endured when it applied to become a training site, incorporating a focus on elite athletes with disabilities in addition to its previously established focus toward recreational programming for regional citizens.

Prior to the designation, the organization focused on programming for people with disabilities of all ages, providing physical activity camps and classes primarily to Alabama citizens. The objective, employees stated, was to filter youth with disabilities into the adult programming to provide a continuous cycle of Lakeshore stakeholders. Elite athletes with disabilities increased their training time at Lakeshore prior to the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games, and Lakeshore became known for its accessible facilities and services. Athletes and coaches said the shift in focus was not negative for Lakeshore because it expanded the organization's reputation geographically and opened new avenues for it to serve people with disabilities. They noted that a result of the shift was the drop in the success of Lakeshore's

competitive teams. The most recent national championship claimed by a Lakeshore team was 2006, six years prior to the time of this study.

> Their level of championship teams has dropped tremendously. … But they're serving the Wounded Warriors, they've got the Paralympic training facility, there's a lot of really positive things that they could stake claim to and say, "Hey, look at this." – Coach 4

Prior to incorporating Paralympic sport into its mission, Lakeshore's competitive teams were its most visible and successful sources of being recognized. Additionally, concern arose about Lakeshore becoming "more corporate," as one participant said, shifting away from primarily serving Alabama citizens and focusing more on international competitors. Paralympic sport, then, became Lakeshore's priority and the competitive teams endured the repercussions, some participants said.

Lakeshore employees admitted the shift in focus was difficult internally as not all staff were convinced of the new direction. Interviews revealed that some staff may have continued to harbor reservations about the direction of the organization. Some participants in this study were uneasy with the direction of the organization and its attempt to "do too much," as one participant said. However, they did not say the focus on Paralympic sport was negative. To them, it was just different from Lakeshore's origins. One employee summed it up by rhetorically asking if Lakeshore will not assist, then who will? The never-say-no attitude stemmed from passion for disability and, as the transition occurred, Paralympic sport as well.

> But it's just sometimes you feel like you're a hamster on a wheel and you just keep going and somebody's turning up the speed limit. But you do it because you love it and you love the outcomes of it all. – Employee 2

The comment represented how people in the organization had difficulty saying no to opportunities. Coaches recognized that also, but, “they feel that it’s their job to not have to say that because the main focus here is helping people with physical disabilities … so whatever they need help on, that’s why they’re there,” said Coach 2. Athletes echoed the statement of Lakeshore employees’ passion, and acknowledged that as a missing quality at other locations.

> The people who work here have a passion for, at least most of them, have a passion for working with people with disabilities and that’s why it does so well. While other gyms and other training centers don’t; they don’t have that passion. So that’s why you don’t have that close personal relationship and things. – Athlete 1

Athlete 1’s comments showed that, while the employees may have wrestled with the organization’s focus, the athletes and several employees said that Lakeshore’s overall mission was to serve people with disabilities, and the organization was doing that at multiple levels.

At 4:05 p.m. the evening before the U.S. women’s wheelchair basketball team began its tryout, a mother dropped off her youth-aged son for his wheelchair basketball practice. The parent parked her van at the main entrance of the fieldhouse where buses loaded and dropped. She kneeled down at the driver’s side of her van and appeared to be repairing something on the front of her son’s wheelchair while he sat in the chair wearing a red t-shirt and gym shorts. When the mother completed the repair, she stood and told her son, “Work hard!” sternly as he wheeled toward the door; she did not go inside. The scene, minus the wheelchair repair, could have been replicated at nearly any youth sport practice.

The young boy was at Lakeshore for his competitive team’s practice, which began with two laps around the track, one forward and one backward. The coach, a Paralympic athlete who

worked at Lakeshore, was vocal with the children, giving them instruction and correcting technique. All members of the team had parents on the baseline watching except the young boy whose mother dropped him off. He was the most advanced player in terms of dribbling and overall basketball skill level. His team was observed by the researcher during a previous site visit, and improvement was evident among the players. When practice concluded, the coach changed clothes and returned to the court to practice agility drills and shoot by herself on Court 1. She began tryouts for the U.S. Paralympic team the following day. The coach/athlete was an example of Lakeshore's two-fold focus on recreation and competitive sport for elite athletes, which employees said help position Lakeshore as a unique environment.

> For a kid on our wheelchair basketball team to be practicing and look down the way and go, "Those guys are practicing for London. I want to be like that one day." That's not as easy of an exposure for somebody at another setting. – Employee 3

In addition to the integrated environment Lakeshore provided by incorporating a Paralympic sport focus, the athletes noted how the employees' familiarity with disability, which likely stemmed from their recreational experience, added to their expertise when serving elite athletes with disabilities in Paralympic sport.

> I mean, now it's the training facility. It's sort of our home for women's wheelchair basketball. … But I mean, bigger than that, I kind of look at it as a facility for people with various disabilities to come and train and sort of learn sport. What they've done with Lakeshore over time and how it's progressed and how it's become the home of so many Paralympic teams is pretty cool. – Athlete 5

Athletes noticed the integrated environment and still appreciated the focus on Paralympic sport. The USOC also said a focus on Paralympic sport while having a recreational component was what resulted in a partnership.

> … [W]e go into the partnerships because they want to make a difference. They want to bring the Olympic and Paralympic movement into the communities so that young people can be motivated whether they are able-bodied or not. And so they are looking for sort of this larger purpose, and that's where we really connect in. – USOC 1

Lakeshore's application for training site designation promoted its recreational and competitive programming, and the USOC acknowledged that such a combination was ideal for a training site designation. While a minority of participants in this study said they felt like the recreational component was being lost amid Lakeshore's Paralympic focus, most athletes, coaches, and employees in this study, as well as the USOC, acknowledged Lakeshore's history and integrated environment at the time data were collected was a benefit for the organization.

Incorporating a greater focus on Paralympic sport was rewarding to athletes with regard to Lakeshore's service mentality. An example of how Lakeshore employees focused on Paralympic sport, specifically, was the education of the athletic training staff and the other Lakeshore employees with regard to sport-specific injuries, according to the athletes. The athletes said Lakeshore employees were prepared to address injuries that come from wheelchair sports more than other locations at which they trained. Injuries for wheelchair sports were identified as primarily occurring in the shoulders, elbows, and wrists as well as blisters on the hands, a contrast to lower-body injuries that trainers may address in able-bodied athletes.

> They understand that you don't get rest in your shoulders if you're a wheelchair user. You practice for three hours and then you've got to push yourself around, so your shoulders don't get the same kind of rest where if you were able to walk and move via that. So the recovery periods are different. – Athlete 5

Attention to sport-specific injuries for athletes who used wheelchairs was evidence that Lakeshore employees were passionate about sport for people with disabilities, particularly at the Paralympic level. The USOC agreed.

> With certain types of disability or injury, you have to have certain knowledge of how to treat that or how to recover from that. Lakeshore really had that so they were able to have programming in those events that cater to Olympic and Paralympic. Their main focus is Paralympic. – USOC 1

The USOC employee noted that Lakeshore's focus was Paralympic sport. Stakeholders recognized the decision to incorporate Paralympic sport into an established recreation program for people with disabilities and the decision to focus on Paralympic sport rather than Olympic sport. Lakeshore set out to carve its niche in training site venues, stating in its designation application that U.S. Olympic Training Centers were faced with increasing demands from Paralympic athletes, and offering another integrated environment where both sets of athletes were welcome could alleviate the demands on other locations. "Moreover, at present there are no Paralympic sport specific training centers, and certainly none with the combined sport-specific and disability-specific knowledge provided at Lakeshore" (Application, 2000, p. 20). Lakeshore staff acknowledged early that they could create unique opportunities for Paralympic athletes, and

those stakeholders (e.g., athletes, coaches, the USOC) said Lakeshore's focus on Paralympic sport was what made it a unique training site.

Athletes in general noted that Lakeshore employees worked to push individuals beyond their comfort level by providing opportunities. Interviews with Lakeshore employees reinforced the same message. In fact, prior to this study, employees who worked closely with the stakeholders were asked to identify the core values of the organization, three of which matched the athletes' experience according to this study: Passion, Integrity, Creating Opportunities, and Raising Expectations. Athletes were unaware of Lakeshore's core values, but interviews revealed their perceptions of Lakeshore employees as passionate, working to create opportunities for people with disabilities, and raising expectations of athletes training on site. "We're reaching people outside of the Alabama and Birmingham area, and that's good because in the end we are hitting our mission, which is to provide services to people with physical disabilities," said Employee 1. Lakeshore administration, in fact, outlined its mission in its application to be designated a training site and presented evidence of how it aligned with the USOC's mission of service to athletes with physical disabilities. "We believe that means we must give these athletes access to facilities, trainers, and resources on par with those found in sports for the able-bodied" (Application, 2000, p. 4). Interviews with employees reinforced that Lakeshore's mission aligned with that of the USOC.

> … [O]ur goal as an organization was not to be a training site. We kind of evolved to that position because we knew it was consistent with our mission. We were already involved in disabled sport. We believed in disabled sport and the benefit it has to a person with a disability. – Employee 5

The acknowledgement of aligned missions provided a confirmation to Lakeshore employees that adopting a greater focus on Paralympic sport fit within the organization's original mission to serve people with physical disabilities.

Ultimately, the Paralympic athletes and coaches who train at Lakeshore said the organization's focus on sport for people with disabilities was a factor in having a positive experience and returning to Lakeshore. The Lakeshore employees said they strive to make Paralympic athletes a top priority.

> I think the crux of it is we say they're important. We have an Olympic and Paralympic designation, but we clearly are all about sport for people with disabilities. It's our priority. … I've talked to an athlete or two, but I think people feel like, "I'm taken seriously when I go to Lakeshore. I'm treated with the level of regard and accommodation that I would hope for." – Employee 3

Athletes agreed that Lakeshore proved Paralympic sport was among its top priorities whereas other training locations were slow to honor Paralympians and in doing so offered stereotypical images, as summed by a conversation with one athlete.

Athlete 3: You’re not going to go anywhere else where you see banners hanging up for Paralympic teams for gold medals. You’re just not going to see that anywhere else where that pride is there for disabled sports. I’m not sure you see it at the other training sites.

Researcher: So when you go to Colorado Springs or Lake Placid, you don’t see that?

Athlete 3: Oh no. Not at all.

Researcher: Do you see the Olympic banners?

Athlete 3: You just see a lot more posters and that type of stuff. Finally, in Colorado Springs on the Olympic Path there’s a Paralympic statue so it’s all encompassing. Everybody else has their own sport. There’s a statue for every sport on the Olympic Path. And then it’s like, oh here’s the catch-all wheelchair … Which, it’s more visible, obviously, than the other disabilities so that’s like the token, here’s the Paralympic statue that’s all encompassing.

Athletes understood why other training locations did not offer parallel services to them compared to their Olympic counterparts, citing the athletes in residency and the number of Olympic teams that trained on site. However, the athletes appeared discouraged that other training sites did not properly recognize their accomplishments, at least until recently. For example, one athlete said a collage of Paralympic team accomplishments and photos was placed in a facility at Colorado Springs, and that prior to the 2004 Paralympic Games a team had its photo placed on a wall as the first Paralympic team to have residency.

The lack of images at other training locations offered a visual reminder to athletes that other locations had an Olympic focus. Lakeshore, according to participants, was just the

opposite, which provided an attractive environment for U.S. Paralympic teams. Even Lakeshore administration altered the imagery within its own facilities to display its focus on Paralympic sport. While the four banners that flanked the USA Olympic rings in the fieldhouse rafters celebrated four Paralympic gold medals, no official U.S. Paralympic mark was displayed in the fieldhouse. Lakeshore employees said that recent changes to the U.S. Paralympic mark delayed them in ordering a banner for display, but that a new banner was ordered because the existing mark appeared to have long-term support from the USOC.

Imagery was prevalent within and around the Lakeshore facilities identifying it as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. The signs had the Olympic rings, which Lakeshore administration sought in its site designation application, and the red, white, and blue colors and logo signaling a USOC-recognized organization. Athletes and coaches agreed that Lakeshore's reputation carried an association with Paralympic sport, but they admitted they did not fully know the scale of the Paralympic focus until arriving at the facility. The acknowledgement reinforced the service quality of Lakeshore's staff and the focus on Paralympic sport.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Lakeshore Foundation became a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site in 2003, making it the first designated facility focused on training for elite athletes with disabilities. The organization's application for designation submitted to the USOC focused on Lakeshore's accessible facilities, and stakeholders admitted that the international reputation of Lakeshore Foundation's training site centered on its world-class facilities for athletes with disabilities. However, the application and reputation offered surface impressions of Lakeshore Foundation. Through interviews with athletes who trained at Lakeshore, with coaches who chose to take their Paralympic teams to Lakeshore instead of other, often more convenient, training facilities, and with Lakeshore employees who worked directly with the training site operation, it became clear that the accessible facilities were but a fraction of why teams trained at Lakeshore. In fact, personal attention (e.g., functional attributes of service quality) was deemed more of an attraction for athletes and coaches—the fact that Lakeshore's employees made them feel welcome and important—in their decisions to bypass other training sites and go to Birmingham, AL, for a smaller yet friendlier environment.

This study examined Lakeshore's application to become a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, and why athletes and coaches choose it as a destination for Paralympic training. Each of those aspects was addressed in this case study, and all aspects are discussed further in this section. Systems theory and stakeholder theory guided the exploration of Lakeshore and the process it underwent to become a designated training site. Social construction theory provided a lens for the second part of this study, exploring why athletes and coaches choose to train at Lakeshore.

Three sections address the two questions asked at the beginning of this study. To address RQ1 about how Lakeshore became a training site, discussions of the training site and stakeholders assist in explaining how the organization fits into the USOC's mission. To address RQ2 about why athletes and teams train at Lakeshore, a discussion of service quality focuses beyond Lakeshore's facilities and more on its employees and the perceptions of stakeholders. Together, the three areas offer insight on the exploration of a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

Lakeshore's Training Site

Lakeshore's lengthy history of providing services for people with disabilities, going back to its time as a rehabilitation hospital, established the groundwork for it to become a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site. Employees at Lakeshore's hospital helped establish a culture of service when Lakeshore formed its foundation and began recreational programming for people with disabilities. The service mentality of the employees in addition to financial backing from the foundation's investment returns, rental property, donations, and membership fees assisted Lakeshore in raising sufficient funds to build a $22 million, 126,000-square-foot athletic facility that is fully accessible for people with disabilities. Coinciding with the planning of the facility in the early 2000s were Lakeshore's discussions with the USOC about becoming a designated training site.

Participants in this study pointed to the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta as a turning point for Lakeshore's involvement with Paralympic sport. Athletes began training at Lakeshore's facilities prior to the 1996 Games, capitalizing on Lakeshore's focus on disability and the geographic proximity to Atlanta. However, the Atlanta Games gave greater cause for concern

about the preparation of U.S. Paralympic athletes, according to Lakeshore employees. Lakeshore's administration began discussions with the USOC in 1998, and after a tumultuous period in USOC leadership, the application for training site designation was submitted in 2000. Three years later, Lakeshore was designated a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

The decision by Lakeshore's administration to pursue training site designation supports that the organization is an open system. The systems view forces organizations to recognize that what is happening outside their boundaries can shape the organization (Rainey, 2009). Open systems "interact with their environments" and can be influenced by factors outside of the system (Ashmos & Huber, 1987, p. 608). Lakeshore displayed interaction and responded to influence from outside factors in its application to the USOC for training site designation when it was stated that training opportunities for Paralympic athletes were limited, partly due to the small number of Olympic Training Centers that accommodated Olympians. The Lakeshore application noted that growth in Paralympic sport—and sport for people with disabilities in general—compared with the small number of accessible facilities presented a problem worth addressing regarding proper training for Paralympic athletes. The Atlanta Paralympic Games fueled Lakeshore's desire to be a training site since Paralympians used the Lakeshore facilities to prepare for the Games, thus deeming them world class and worthy of elite expectations. The stakeholders to whom Lakeshore devoted its mission—people with disabilities who wanted to pursue sport and recreation—provided an environmental influence that could not be ignored. As Covell et al. (2007) stated, an organization cannot ignore the interests and actions of its stakeholders. Therefore, Lakeshore responded by pursuing an extension of its mission, serving elite athletes with disabilities in their pursuit of Paralympic sport.

The open system, then, applies to Lakeshore with regard to its transformation from a non-profit organization that provided physical activity programming for regional stakeholders to an internationally known training site for U.S. Paralympics that is the home base for three Paralympic gold-medal winning teams and several other elite athletes. Lakeshore's administration identified a gap in providing services for people with disabilities, recognized how it could fill that gap in services, and provided the facilities and service quality attributes to create a unique training site that was the first of its kind. In less than 10 years, the focus on Paralympic sport was institutionalized within Lakeshore's culture. In fact, although two other locations were designated as U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Sites as of 2012, Lakeshore was the only location that offered full services for a variety of Paralympic sports and operated primarily with a Paralympic focus.

The open system at Lakeshore guided its process to become a training site, but the organization's history of offering flexibility to multiple needs (e.g., characteristics of an open system) was established well before the Paralympic focus. The organization had long employed personnel to assist people with physical disabilities to exercise recreationally and train in their respective sports, and therefore was prepared to be flexible in approaches to reach a specific goal for different groups of stakeholders. For example, a youth participating in competitive basketball may seek to improve agility in a wheelchair whereas a senior adult in a recreational swimming class may seek aquatics therapy in a social setting. Still, a Paralympic team traveling from the West Coast may seek personal attention it did not receive from another training location. Therefore, equifinality—reaching the same final state through a variety of paths—occurs at Lakeshore in the programming and training of elite athletes who have different disabilities and

capabilities (Ashmos & Huber, 1987; Katz & Kahn, 1966). In sport, each individual has different levels of ability and talent, and individuals with disabilities are no different. Lakeshore succeeded in its application to become a designated training site by recognizing that Paralympic athletes were included in its mission to serve people with disabilities through recreation and sport. The elite level of competition in which those athletes competed, in fact, did not require Lakeshore to overhaul its system or business model in order to serve an additional group of stakeholders. Instead, it applied the Hedgehog Concept to its existing model of business (Collins, 2001).

Managers employ the Hedgehog Concept when their organization cuts multiple pursuits into one basic principle that guides and unifies the organization (Collins, 2001). Organizational leaders strive to achieve three circles within the Hedgehog Concept: (a) be the best in the world, (b) identify what drives the economic engine, and (c) be passionate about the focus. Lakeshore Foundation reached all three of the circles by identifying how sponsorship and funding associated with being a USOC-designated training site would increase the economic foundation and allow the organization to passionately strive to be the best in the world at providing a site for Paralympians to train. Interviews with participants revealed Lakeshore employees' passion for serving athletes with disabilities (e.g., functional attribute). For example, stakeholders such as athletes and coaches praised Lakeshore employees' passion for Paralympic sport, particularly during the moments of truth. Observations revealed the environment and accessible facilities supported that passion (e.g., environmental attribute). The turning point from buildup to breakthrough involved Collins's (2001) term of confronting the brutal fact that Lakeshore was good at providing recreational opportunities for people with disabilities, but it could be the best

at offering services to Paralympic athletes. Therefore, Lakeshore employees were able to establish a Culture of Discipline by sticking to the Hedgehog Concept of doing what they did best: provide an elite training site for athletes with disabilities (Collins, 2001). While Lakeshore's stakeholders expanded, its mission did not change.

Lakeshore's Stakeholders

A stakeholder can be defined as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of a corporation's purpose" (Freeman, Harrison, & Wicks, 2007, p. 6). Upon being designated as a training site, Lakeshore's stakeholders included Paralympic athletes and coaches and the USOC, in addition to existing stakeholders such as employees, members, and donors/sponsors. Service toward stakeholders is a primary focus of an organization, and Lakeshore's training site was able to serve its stakeholders on multiple levels. Freeman et al. (2007) outlined 10 guiding principles when managing stakeholders, six of which applied to Lakeshore's training site: serving the stakeholders, fulfill a commitment to stakeholders, intensive communication with stakeholders, stakeholders are real people, engagement in both primary and secondary stakeholders, and monitoring ways to better serve stakeholders. Each of these principles is discussed with regard to Lakeshore's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site.

Serving Stakeholders

Freeman et al. (2007) suggested organizations should never trade off an interest of one stakeholder over another. Participants who had long-term relationships with Lakeshore in various capacities (e.g., athlete, coach, employee) struggled with the direction of the organization, stating recreational programming and competitive athletics had suffered because of the Paralympic

focus. While the success of Lakeshore's competitive teams dropped and recreational programming was scaled back, the organization continued to follow its mission by incorporating Paralympic athletes. It appeared that those participants who saw Lakeshore's commitment to Paralympic sport were nostalgic of the organization's grass-roots dedication and hesitant to fully embrace a shift in serving people with disabilities. Interviews with employees and observations of the Lakeshore environment revealed that the shift may have occurred strictly as a business decision to remain a leader in service toward people with disabilities. The Paralympic focus increased visibility, sponsorship, and support at the state and national level (e.g., the U.S. Speaker of the House visited the facility in 2008 in support of a military-based program at Lakeshore).

The Paralympic stakeholders acknowledged that Lakeshore offered a one-of-a-kind, full-service training facility and yet they still recognized Lakeshore for its recreational programming in an integrated environment. The recognition of both qualities showed that stakeholders outside of Lakeshore respected the organization's dual role in providing Paralympic services while continuing to offer competitive and recreational athletics. Employees within the organization, therefore, displayed what Collins (2001) called a Culture of Discipline in his *Good to Great* assessment to where all organizational decisions are made based on adhering to the Hedgehog Concept. While the training site was not the only aspect of Lakeshore's business, it appeared to be the driving force behind Lakeshore's growth and increasing reputation.

Commitment to Stakeholders

Lakeshore's commitment to Paralympic sport was displayed through building an accessible athletic facility in the early 2000s, refurbishing a dormitory and dining hall in 2009,

and offering a reliable environment for stakeholders who depend upon consistency in activities of daily living. Athletes and coaches said when they trained at other locations, specifically the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, they were told when they were allowed to train and have court time. However, at Lakeshore, the teams worked with the Lakeshore employees to decide upon the schedule, and the Lakeshore staff asked the teams when they would like to use courts, eat, and have other activities. The contrast in commitment is a realization that locations like Colorado Springs are crowded in terms of Olympic and Paralympic training. Stakeholders such as athletes with disabilities have different needs than able-bodied athletes with regard to facility accessibility, equipment, and training needs. Lakeshore's accessible facilities and equipment specific to Paralympic sports are evidence of its commitment level toward its stakeholders. Even actions taken by Lakeshore staff revealed the dedication to clients and the flexibility required depending on needs or even preference. For example, when goalball trained at Lakeshore, all three courts were closed, signs were posted on the fieldhouse doors requesting silence for the sport's needs, and membership was informed in advance to respect the quiet rules of the sport. Conversely, when wheelchair basketball trained at Lakeshore, courts not in use by the Paralympic team were open and the facility's loudspeakers played music because the athletes enjoyed it.

Communication with Stakeholders

Lakeshore employees working directly with the training site displayed intensive communication and dialogue with the Paralympic stakeholders, as suggested by Freeman et al. (2007). The communication between the organization and athletes and coaches resulted in a pleasing environment for the stakeholders. The data contained numerous examples regarding

Lakeshore's communication and its advantages. Scheduling was previously mentioned as one way Lakeshore worked with the teams to provide a convenient environment, but more specifically mentioned were the actions taken by Lakeshore employees in response to their communication with teams. As an example, an employee whose job duties included oversight of the dormitory and dining services worked with teams to plan meals for their training camps, and she was privy to athlete food preferences and allergies, therefore planning meals accordingly. Athletes and coaches said that type of attention or even communication at other training locations was non-existent.

Personalization

Freeman et al. (2007) stated that stakeholders are complex, driving home the fact that service to stakeholders is not to be a uniform quality. Lakeshore offered evidence that its staff displayed rich personalization with Paralympic teams by knowing the athletes' names, recalling their disability and training needs, and becoming friends with the athletes outside of the training camps. The employees, as previously discussed, were rarely asked to perform a task twice. As an example of equipment and service, the wheelchair basketball team requested shot clocks during its first training camp at Lakeshore in order to conduct game-ending scenarios. The staff complied and installed shot clocks for the team's use during that training camp, and each time the team returned for a camp or tryout the shot clocks were part of the supplies checklist. Conversely, the athletes and coaches said other locations failed to provide shot clocks for the team, and that requesting the shot clocks at those locations was time consuming once the team was on site. With regard to friendship, athletes said they considered some Lakeshore employees as friends, and the Lakeshore employees said the same. One group of athletes at Lakeshore for a

training camp extended their trip to spend personal time with employees after the training camp concluded. Athletes and coaches noted that one of the most important qualities of Lakeshore employees was they knew the athletes by name, taking an extra step to offer personal attention and show that it was important to have the teams train at Lakeshore.

Engagement

Engagement between Lakeshore and its stakeholders was established from the outset of the training site and was evident in facility design and through support of Paralympic teams. The refurbishing of the dormitory included consultation with athletes with disabilities for accessibility design work. Regarding Lakeshore's support of Paralympic teams, athletes and coaches cited the impression it made on them when the organization's president came out to watch training camps, offering a display of support for their success. In fact, during an observation, the Lakeshore president came onto the sidelines of a wheelchair basketball scrimmage and watched for approximately 20 minutes. Athletes and coaches said they rarely had spectators at other training locations and never had administrators watch their practices. The engagement in environmental and functional attributes of service quality displayed Lakeshore's investment in its Paralympic stakeholders.

Improvement of Service

When Lakeshore became a training site, athletes stayed on-site in an old hospital wing and ate hospital food in the dining hall. The athletes complained about the hospital food and setting, and Lakeshore administration responded by refurbishing the dormitory and installing its own kitchen and cooking staff for personalized meals. During this study, athletes and coaches were asked how Lakeshore could improve its service to stakeholders. The majority of

participants hesitated when asked the question, many of them saying there was nothing it could improve upon. When participants offered answers to the question, they included the installation of a film room and digital technology equipment in the fieldhouse, adding a printer in the dormitory, increasing the number of portable basketball goals, and refurbishing and updating the basketball court's markings. None of the improvements seemed extraordinary for an organization operating on an $8 million budget (Lakeshore employee, personal communication, Jan. 6, 2012).

Applying those guiding principles to Lakeshore Foundation creates a model that places the stakeholders at the heart of business, an open systems model that forces the organization to be flexible to stakeholder needs and desires. Addressing those needs and desires was specifically what stakeholders said was Lakeshore's biggest asset: its service quality attributes.

Lakeshore's Service Quality

Lakeshore's attention to stakeholders sheds light on the level of service quality provided by the organization and its employees. Service quality was an aspect of this study that guided the selection of questions for interviews, but was not expected to be the primary reason athletes and coaches chose to train at Lakeshore. Participants noted that accessible facilities may attract outsiders to Lakeshore, but service quality kept them coming back and made Lakeshore their preference for athletic training. Results from this study applied service quality to Lakeshore with regard to the environmental and functional attributes.

Environmental

Environmental attributes of service quality are the facility and environment in which the consumer spends the most time. Lakeshore's environment includes a fully accessible dormitory and fieldhouse where athletes with disabilities train. The accessibility feature of Lakeshore's

facilities is attractive among the population of athletes with disabilities. In fact, inaccessibility of facilities is among the reasons why individuals do not seek physical activity (Rimmer et al., 2004). Rimmer et al. (2004) identified 10 major categories of barriers and facilitators related to access and participation for people with disabilities, and four of them relate to this study: Build and Natural Environment; Cost/Economic; Equipment; and Guidelines, Codes, Regulations, and Laws.

Build and natural environment. With regard to the natural environment, Rimmer et al. (2004) referred to facilities and environments within the facilities such as locker rooms, swimming pools, and bathrooms. These environments at Lakeshore were fully accessible beyond basic ADA mandates. For example, the parking lot for the main building had two rows of accessible parking and a level grade to the entrance, well beyond the percentage mandate set forth by the ADA based on lot size. The lower-level locker rooms were accessible for multiple disability types and were noted by the coaches and athletes as providing a comfortable environment that eases anticipation when training at Lakeshore. Rimmer et al. (2004) suggested the importance of facilitators to combat inaccessibility, such as accessible parking, push-button operated doors, multi-level desks, ramps to pools, and family changing rooms, among other features. Lakeshore met each of those suggestions with its accessible environment.

Cost/economic. The economic engine of Lakeshore Foundation separated it from non-profit peers in that it had sources of both inconsistent income and consistent income. The fluctuating income sources for Lakeshore Foundation were its investment returns decided upon by the board of trustees, philanthropy, and membership revenue, each of which may change based upon economic conditions beyond Lakeshore’s control. In contrast, Lakeshore’s stable

income was from rental property on its campus. The decision by Lakeshore administration to form the Lakeshore Foundation and lease the rehabilitation hospital to a medical provider resulted in a stable flow of income for the foundation to pay bills for the athletic facility and offer growth toward the foundation's endowment. Financial constraints are among the biggest barriers for facilities to offer service to people with disabilities, whether from refurbishing existing buildings or expanding accessible equipment and services provided by the organization (Rimmer et al., 2004). Lakeshore's economic stability was another means by which it created a unique business plan that, by admission from employees, should not work. Employees admitted the organization must run like a business to where more consumers or clients translates into more revenue, but non-profit operations typically spend more money for every consumer or client gained.

Equipment. Lack of accessible equipment is among the reasons training facilities are not fully accessible for people with disabilities (Cardinal & Spaziani, 2003; Nary et al., 2000). Lakeshore, however, offered a fitness area where all machines were accessible for people with disabilities. Athletes with visual impairments said some equipment was touch-screen, and therefore required assistance from Lakeshore employees. However, those athletes reiterated that the Lakeshore environment created a sense of comfort among them to where they were unafraid to seek assistance. That comfort level may not be present for first-time consumers at Lakeshore, which could be of concern. The focus of this study was on Paralympic sport; therefore, the examples of accessible equipment availability were consistent throughout the observations and interviews. From a Paralympic focus, the goalball coach said that prior to the team's initial training camp at Lakeshore, the only thing preventing the team from coming there to train was a

set of goals for the court. Lakeshore purchased the goals, and the team began training there. From a recreational focus, youth participating on the competitive teams at Lakeshore came into the facility on their own wheelchairs and went to a storage space in the fieldhouse to get their basketball chairs. A parent confirmed that the basketball chairs were Lakeshore's property; Lakeshore employees fitted the youth in a chair and reserved it for him or her during the practice and game schedule. By providing accessible equipment, particularly at the recreational level, Lakeshore assisted in offsetting economic barriers to participation that oftentimes exclude people with disabilities.

Guidelines, codes, regulations, and laws. Facilities are required by law to be ADA compliant, yet as athletes and coaches pointed out, ADA compliant and accessible have different meanings. The legal mandate offers specific measurements for facilities to be ADA compliant, yet oftentimes accessibility goes beyond what is legally required. Athletes offered the example of door width during the refurbishing of the Lakeshore dormitory. While 32 inches is the legal mandate, a sport wheelchair has a wider wheelbase and may not clear 32 inches. Other examples of Lakeshore's decision to offer accessible facilities rather than ADA-compliant facilities are the multi-tiered desks in the fitness area and main building's lobby, the multiple entrances into the pools, and the contrasts provided in the dormitory for visual impairments.

Lakeshore employees reiterated they attempted to make sound business decisions with regard to operating the training site and its environment. Environmental attributes, in fact, affect the overall perception of quality in the service encounter (Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1990; Wakefield et al., 1996). Especially in the sports context, the service environment makes important contributions to satisfaction levels since the consumer spends an extended period of time

observing and experiencing the environment. Perceptions of the sports facility influence excitement and satisfaction (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1993), spectators' desire to stay in the environment (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995; Wakefield et al., 1996), and their likelihood of re-patronizing the same facility (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008; Wakefield et al., 1996). Those sound business decisions resulted in Lakeshore fulfilling the promises made in its training site application to the USOC and filling a void sought by athletes with disabilities with regard to environmental attributes of service quality.

Functional

The ADA prohibits operators of public accommodations from discriminating by denying or offering unequal opportunity, or offering it in environments that are not integrated in terms of equal access or treatment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990; Burgdorf, 1991). By this definition and through interviews with athletes who also trained at locations other than Lakeshore Foundation, other training sites and centers could be considered acting in a discriminatory manner through the services offered in regard to the functional attribute. The functional attribute of service quality is the consumers' perception of service employees during the service delivery. Athletes and coaches said, and Lakeshore and USOC employees agreed, that the greatest qualities Lakeshore offered to its stakeholders were personal attention and a focus on Paralympic sport. Lakeshore's ability to offer such qualities may be due to its size and the smaller number of athletes and teams training there compared to larger locations such as the training center at Colorado Springs. In fact, if more teams trained at Lakeshore, it may put the administration in a compromising position with regard to properly dividing resources among recreational programming, competitive teams, and Paralympic training to where one aspect

would likely suffer. Based on precedence set when Lakeshore received training site designation, both the recreational programming and competitive teams would likely experience a greater decrease in resources in order to maintain the high level of functional attributes for Paralympic training. Also, the perceived discriminatory actions by other locations may have been a result of Lakeshore's positive reputation among the athletes and coaches.

The evaluation of functional attribute was based on the consumers' perceptions of service employees during the service delivery; therefore the emphasis was placed upon how Lakeshore's employees treated the Paralympic athletes, coaches, and teams overall during these moments of truth when the organization and its employees had interactions or touch points with stakeholders (Carlzon, 1989; Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008). Whereas environmental attributes may be assessed through a checklist of mandates and evaluating whether a facility meets those guidelines, functional attributes are more abstract and must rely on a person's perspective and observations of an environment. Employees are important because they are the first point of contact with consumers during those moments of truth, and athletes and coaches emphasized the passion Lakeshore employees had about disability in general and Paralympic sport specifically.

Those moments of truth, in turn, shape an individual's interpretation of reality. Social construction theory suggests that interpretation of reality is created by social surroundings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The application to sport and disability is rather straightforward. While others may perceive a person using a wheelchair as limited in his or her mobility, within the proper social surrounding that same person is considered an elite performer on the basketball court. Lakeshore's functional attribute supported the claim that social surroundings construct reality. The social surroundings at Lakeshore allowed the employee who also played on the U.S.

women's wheelchair basketball team to hold the identity of employee one day, coach of the competitive youth teams later that night, and Paralympic athlete the following day. Her identity, however, was never primarily defined as "a person with a disability." The example shows that Lakeshore employees offered consistency in their moments of truth, offering respect for the athletes and coaches as Paralympians rather than focusing on disability or challenges the individuals may have faced.

In two site visits to Lakeshore that included interviews with athletes, coaches, and employees and also included multiple observations of the environment, disability never was the focus. Employees did not discuss disability unless in reference to the training site, and athletes did not mention disability unless discussing the facility's accessibility. The message sent was that Lakeshore's service quality with regard to the functional attribute focused on the employees serving a team of elite athletes training for international competition. The service at Lakeshore offered a sense of normalcy rather than exploiting differences in ability (Lundberg et al., 2011), whereas the environment at other training sites may offer the contrary due to the focus on Olympians. Athletes indicated the functional attribute of other training locations exploited their differences. Athletes were housed on separate floors at other locations, segregating athletes with disabilities from able-bodied athletes. Goalball athletes had to travel off-site to practice because other facilities could not accommodate the sport's need for silence. Other locations operated by the USOC (e.g., U.S. Olympic Training Centers) highlighted individual Olympic sports through on-site imagery—each sport had its own image—but used a stereotypical wheelchair image to represent Paralympic sport as a whole, although not all Paralympians use wheelchairs. Differences such as these may be overlooked to the unaware eye, but they exploit differences

between able-bodied athletes and athletes with disabilities. Whether intentional or not, the result is a creation of "normal" athletes (e.g., able-bodied) because of the imagery and integration, and "non-normal" athletes (e.g., athletes with disabilities) because of the lack of imagery and integration.

Sport for people with disabilities has allowed a segment of the population to redefine abilities and influence image perceptions (Swartz & Watermeyer, 2007; Woods, 2007). Without opportunity, however, redefining abilities and perceptions may never happen. Service quality attributes at other locations offered unequal opportunity or opportunity in segregated environments with unequal access or treatment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 1990; Burgdorf, 1991). By the ADA's definition, such service quality may qualify as discriminatory, no matter the size of the organization or the number of stakeholders it serves. Athletes and coaches did not claim they were being discriminated against at other locations. Instead, they emphasized the positive experiences at Lakeshore, noting how Lakeshore's environment made them feel comfortable and welcome. The athletes' comments related back to Lakeshore's original wording in its training site application in which it wanted to offer an environment that was inclusive and accepting (Application, 2000). The consistency mentioned by the teams not only related to facility access, but also focused on how they were treated by employees as first-class athletes. Lakeshore employees knew their stakeholders and catered to their needs specifically rather than generally.

Implications and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to examine how Lakeshore became a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site and to explore why Paralympic athletes and teams choose to train

there. The reason for such a study was because Lakeshore was the first USOC-designated training site with an emphasis on Paralympic sport. While two other training sites also received the designation due to serving Paralympic athletes, Lakeshore was the first and remained the only training site at the time of this study to offer a full-service facility for Paralympians that included athletic training, sports science, and residential services such as a dining hall and dormitory. The findings of this study revealed that accessible facilities were important for a successful training site designation, but more important to athlete and team retention was service quality's functional attribute.

From an organizational perspective, environmental attributes such as facilities may influence consumer participation (e.g., Paralympic teams training at a location), but the functional attributes of service quality are essential to retention (e.g., Paralympic teams returning regularly). Teams initially chose to train at Lakeshore due to the accessible facilities it offered, and the organization is internationally known for its accessible training facilities for Paralympic teams. The athletes and coaches, however, said they believe the personal attention and focus on Paralympic sport are why they continue to train at Lakeshore. In other words, how they are treated at Lakeshore brings them back. Therefore, the functional attribute of service quality becomes important to an organization's long-term retention of consumers, particularly in the physical fitness category and for organizations that serve underrepresented populations due to the scope of this study.

The primary management implications of this study are that greater service quality may affect success. The athletes and coaches in this study praised Lakeshore's service quality attributes for impacting their success. Three Paralympic teams that claimed Lakeshore as their

training home in 2008 were the only three teams to win gold medals in the 2008 Paralympic Games. That is not to say there was a direct correlation between Lakeshore's service quality and Paralympic Games success as that is a relationship that must be measured in a longitudinal study. Still, the service quality offered by Lakeshore provided a comfortable and consistent environment for the teams as they trained, removing the typical daily barriers of access and social acceptance that may have in fact been present at other training sites and centers.

Additionally, this study sheds light on issues of inclusion and integration with regard to people with disabilities. Lakeshore offered an environment in which people with disabilities participating in sport was the norm, corroborating the core value of raising expectations that was identified by employees. The environment was not exclusive to people with disabilities as able-bodied participants were involved in the recreational programming and Olympic athletes were welcome to train at the facility although Lakeshore staff said very few actually did train there. While the reciprocal was true at Olympic training sites and centers, the Paralympic athletes who participated in this study implied they did not feel equally treated or welcome in some instances where Olympians were given favorable treatment with regard to gym space or attention from athletic trainers. It should be noted that the tone of this study may have shifted if able-bodied athletes who trained at Lakeshore were included; however, that was beyond the scope of this study. The implications of this study with regard to inclusion and integration sheds light on how people with disabilities may feel in environments that were designed specifically for an able-bodied population, and gives voice to athletes with disabilities when they are in an inclusive and integrated environment.

This study revealed practical recommendations for the USOC, which are described hereafter:

- **Be knowledgeable of minority voices.** Participants in this study voiced that other training locations met training needs but failed to fully serve the needs of Paralympic athletes. For example, athletes had to explain their disability and training needs to each athletic trainer at larger sites, and some athletes and coaches noted that their training schedules were disrupted for preferential treatment toward Olympic teams. It is natural that locations may display preferential treatment to athletes and teams in residence. However, it is recommended that other training locations maintain a greater pulse on the minority voices using the facilities, such as Paralympians or athletes using the facilities but not residing on site. This recommendation is made because the participants in this study voiced concerns about other training locations as if those locations were unaware of such discrepancy in the services offered.
- **Enhance environmental and functional attributes of service quality.** The environmental and functional attributes of service quality were proven to be essential in attracting and retaining consumers in this study. Athletes and coaches noted that Lakeshore's environmental attributes contributed to teams' initial decision to train at Lakeshore but functional attributes contributed to their decision to continue training at Lakeshore. Recommendations for the USOC include an enhancement of environmental attributes to provide more accessible facilities at training centers and training sites with consultation from athletes with physical disabilities. As participants noted, there is a difference between ADA compliant and accessible. Compliance meets legal requirements

whereas accessible is what is practically usable. The USOC can enhance environmental attributes at training centers and training sites through consultation with athletes with disabilities, even by holding a focus group to gain knowledge of needs or concerns. The consultation would allow the USOC-designated facilities to structurally display the organization's dedication to inclusion and integration. Functional attributes of service quality can be enhanced through customer service education of facility staff, particularly with regard to addressing the needs of athletes with disabilities. It should be noted that many members of Lakeshore's staff have backgrounds in therapeutic recreation and working with people with disabilities, which predisposes them to addressing the needs of that population. While other training centers and training sites need not seek staff with such backgrounds, it may be beneficial for locations to provide professional development options to enhance the functional attributes of the staff's service quality.

- **Determine where Paralympic sport fits into the USOC's mission.** Leadership turnover at the USOC delayed Lakeshore's site designation application process. Lakeshore employees noted that during that time, USOC administration addressed the organization's dedication toward Paralympic sport. A recommendation for the USOC moving forward is to further evaluate where Paralympic sport fits within its mission. Participants in this study suggested that the USOC acknowledged Paralympic sport, but that full support for those teams could be improved. Therefore, it is recommended that the USOC evaluate whether it should continue to administer U.S. Paralympics or allow it to operate separately as most other countries do. A separate governing body may present resource

challenges, but continuing to operate U.S. Paralympics within the USOC's governance structure may maintain existing challenges of equality.

This study also revealed practical recommendations for training facility managers. Recommendations for managers are as follows:

- **Use environmental attributes to attract consumers.** Participants from this study acknowledged that environmental attributes (e.g., accessible facilities) initially attracted them to select Lakeshore as a training location. Training facility administration may be able to use environmental attributes for marketing purposes to attract first-time consumers. The environmental attributes such as equipment and facilities are important because consumers can quickly confirm those attributes on the first visit, whereas confirmation of functional attributes may take longer. A recommendation for training facility managers is to use environmental attributes to market to potential first-time consumers.
- **Use functional attributes to retain consumers.** Participants from this study said that functional attributes such as personal attention and focus on consumers' individual needs are what brought them back as repeat consumers. Training facility administration may use functional attributes as a public relations arm for proper treatment of consumers, which may in turn serve as word-of-mouth advertising. Therefore, functional attributes of service quality may work two-fold for the organization by retaining consumers and spreading a positive reputation to potential new consumers. A recommendation for training facility managers is to train staff on the functional attributes of service quality and use personal attention to increase consumer loyalty.

- **Maintain a pulse on minority voices.** This study gave voice to a minority population in that Paralympic participants expressed they were not treated equally at training locations that primarily served able-bodied athletes. Not all training facilities may have consumers with disabilities, but managers must be prepared and open for such a possibility. In fact, targeting minority populations such as people with disabilities as potential consumers may increase revenue. In turn, the facility staff must be prepared to serve such a population that has unique physical needs and requests. Therefore, it is recommended that training facility managers maintain a pulse on minority voices both with external stakeholders (e.g., non-consumers) to know how they are or are not serving that population, as well as internal stakeholders (e.g., consumers) to know how to better serve that population. Heeding this recommendation would improve awareness among administration with regard to minority population needs and serve as a marketing tool to potentially increase consumers and revenue.

Limitations

Limitations of this study align with those of other single-case studies in that the findings of this research cannot be generalized, the duration of the study may not have captured the complete experience, and the sample selection and location of data collection were not diverse (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Each of these limitations is important to note due to their association with case study and exploring a single organization and the experiences of its stakeholders.

Findings from this study cannot be generalized to all training facilities or organizations that serve people with disabilities. It is impossible to infer that interviews with 15 participants

and observations during two site visits represent the feelings of all Paralympians with regard to their training site locations or all training locations in general. This study only included athletes from the U.S. women's goalball team and the U.S. women's wheelchair basketball team. It should be noted that Lakeshore had no peer facilities to which it could compare; therefore, stating that Lakeshore's environment offered the ideal experience for Paralympians could not be made with full confidence. Still, the purpose of this study was to examine Lakeshore as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, and therefore the goal was not generalization but simply to explore the organization and why teams train there.

Another limitation is the duration of the study. Data were collected on two site visits, each of which lasted two days for a total of four days. The site visits corresponded with scheduled Paralympic training camps from two Paralympic teams, so it can be assumed that the Lakeshore staff was more conscious of its actions when hosting U.S. national teams for the weekend. Additionally, while each site visit was two days in length, the actual training camps on both visits lasted four days each. The researcher was limited to observing only half of the training camps and may have missed alternate experiences within the weekend stays by the two teams. This study was limited in the duration partly due to the small number of Paralympic training camps hosted at Lakeshore and how those camps fit within the researcher's timeline for this study. Therefore, the choice was made to attend one training camp and one tryout, both of which were teams comprised of all women.

Finally, this study was limited in its sample and the location of data collection. Snowball sampling was used to identify Lakeshore employees to participate in this study, and therefore the Lakeshore informant who assisted in identifying the sample may have selected employees who

would speak positively about the organization. Similarly, athletes who participated in this study were recommended by the team's coaching staff and were athletes who had been national team members the longest. The sample selection may have resulted in athletes who would speak positively or were considering their participation similar to that of a media interview where positive rhetoric may have been preferred by coaches. Additionally, all interviews were conducted on Lakeshore's training site campus. While this is an advantage to the researcher because of collecting data within the environment, it also may have influenced the participants to speak positively about the environment because they were in the environment during data collection. Each participant had existing relationships with Lakeshore. One athlete and one coach previously worked at Lakeshore, and the remaining athletes and coaches previously visited Lakeshore for training camps or competition. The participants may have avoided speaking negatively about Lakeshore due to those previous or existing relationships with the organization for fear that the information may get back to the organization and its administration, thus the potential for socially desirable responses. With regard to demographics of the sample, all athlete participants were female and all coach participants were male, not by choice but rather due to the scheduling of site visits and agreement from the coaches to participate. Additionally, all participants were white, limiting the racial diversity within this study. A more gender-diverse and racially-diverse sample selection may have affected the responses, although gender and race selection within the sample was beyond the scope of this study.

Most of the limitations of this study can be overcome in the future. Generalizability may be overcome by quantitative inquiry on this subject, surveying all U.S. Paralympians and their coaches to gain insight on general training site service quality and their choices regarding

training site selection. Longitudinal studies may overcome the duration limitation, which would require a deeper investment from the researcher whether he or she studied Paralympic athletes and teams or organizations that serve them. Finally, a greater variety of participants such as male athletes and female coaches may be achieved through alternative sampling such as random or quota sampling to meet a desirable and diverse sample group.

Future Research

Exploring Lakeshore Foundation's U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site opened a list of research opportunities that have traditionally been neglected with regard to sport and disability. Paralympic sport has been understudied in the areas of access (Gold & Gold, 2007), athletes (Banack, 2009), and governance and structure (Hums & MacLean, 2008; Hums et al., 2003). This study had qualities of each area with regard to Lakeshore's accessible facilities, the athletes' training experience at Lakeshore, and Lakeshore's relationship with the Paralympic governing body, the USOC. Future studies on the topic of Paralympic sport should expand on each of these areas, particularly with regard to the service quality attributes provided for people with disabilities. Service quality toward people with disabilities is an area that can be expanded within both the service quality literature and disability literature.

Lakeshore Foundation was the first USOC-designated training site to emphasize Paralympic sport. Two other training sites with a Paralympic emphasis also have received the designation, although they do not offer full service to athletes. Therefore, the unique facility and service quality Lakeshore offers presents itself as a model for a future Paralympic training center, which would mirror the USOC-operated Olympic Training Centers. A study should outline the business principles of Lakeshore with regard to its revenue and expenses as a

foundation and its daily operation as a membership-based fitness club. This study's focus was on the Paralympic operation offered by Lakeshore, and therefore did not include those business principles in the design.

Future work may also explore U.S. Olympic Training Centers and U.S. Olympic Training Sites to compare and contrast the services offered to stakeholders with that of Lakeshore Foundation. The participants in this study noted how they felt Olympic athletes received all the personal attention and service at the Olympic Training Centers. A follow-up study should explore the perceptions Olympic athletes have about their service quality and compare and contrast it with those comments from the Paralympic athletes.

Finally, this study focused solely on one training site in the United States that must comply with ADA standards and made an organizational decision to provide access beyond those standards. Additionally, the organization's employees took great pride in the service quality they offered to Paralympic athletes and teams who chose to train at the organization's facilities. Future research should go beyond the United States and the service it provides to its Paralympic athletes and teams to explore the environments in which Paralympians from other countries train and the service quality offered to them. Research in this area may help explore how to better evaluate the service quality offered by U.S. training sites in comparison to training sites in other countries.

Conclusion

DePauw and Gavron (1995) identified parallels between women and people with disabilities and their desires to participate in sport, four of which apply to this study. They are lack of organized programs, lack of access to coaches and training programs, lack of accessible

facilities, and limiting psychological and sociological factors. In fact, one participant in this study compared the state of disability sport at the time of this study to women's sports in the 1970s, when access and opportunity were at a minimum (Fay, 1999). Lakeshore Foundation's 2003 designation as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site has helped address concerns of opportunities for athletes with disabilities. Paralympic athletes were not receiving proper attention at other Olympic-focused training sites. Lakeshore administration took action, and within a decade the organization became the premium location for Paralympic training, particularly for goalball, wheelchair rugby, and wheelchair basketball.

Lakeshore's application to be a designated training site stated it would provide appropriate facilities for athletes with disabilities, prepare Paralympic athletes for the highest levels of competition, apply research toward training, and use resources to gather and share information "that will not only help the athlete of today, but will also set the stage for even higher levels of performance in the future" (Application, 2000, p. 22). Lakeshore met the four provisions it offered in the application. The accessible facilities offered at Lakeshore Foundation's training site were the surface attraction for athletes with disabilities and created an international reputation for the organization. Employees joked that people in local Birmingham grocery stores inquired about Lakeshore because of their unfamiliarity, yet people in Switzerland and Germany recognized the name due to its reputation as a training site. That very scenario is why not all is perfect at Lakeshore.

Employees and other participants who had lengthy histories with Lakeshore seemed torn about the direction of organization and the magnitude to which it has grown. Those individuals did not chastise the organization for its pursuit of becoming a training site. Rather, they simply

stated they were disappointed to see the repercussions of such growth affect the recreational programming and competitive athletic programs housed at Lakeshore with regard to serving Alabamians. While two other training sites also served Paralympians in at least one sport, no other location offered a multi-sport platform with athletic training, dining services, housing, and research support, each of which took resources away from recreational programming. Each of those aspects was advertised in Lakeshore's application to become a training site and, as of this study, allowed Lakeshore to maintain its uniqueness with regard to facilities.

Yet, facilities are not what kept the U.S. Paralympic teams returning to train at Lakeshore; it was service quality attributes. Lakeshore employees treated Paralympians with respect while offering personal attention and unwavering service to make their experience at the training site easy and comfortable. Interviews and observations revealed that Lakeshore employees were passionate toward providing an elite training environment for athletes. Employees identified similar qualities in a brainstorming session several years prior to this study in which they were asked to identify the core values of Lakeshore. The employees said: Passion, Integrity, Creating Opportunities, and Raising Expectations. This study revealed that after Lakeshore's designation as a U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site, athletes and coaches chose to continually train at Lakeshore because it offered those precise qualities.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

History of USOC Leadership, 2000-2005

Year	USOC Leadership Change
2000	Norman P. Blake named CEO
2000	Scott Blackmun named interim CEO after Blake resigns
2001	Lloyd Ward named CEO
2002	Sandy Baldwin resigns as USOC president; Marty Mankamyer named president
2003	Mankamyer resigns as president; Bill Martin named interim president
2003	Ward resigns as CEO; Jim Scherr named interim CEO
2004	Peter Uberroth named chair of new board of trustees, which has 11 members instead of the 125 members it had in 2003
2005	Scherr named CEO

Source: The Sports Group. (2009). *USOC-Colorado Springs History.* Retrieved from http://www.coloradospringssports.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=88&Itemid=101/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=269&Itemid=71.

Table 2

Lakeshore Foundation Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets 1996-1998

	1996	1997	1998
Revenues and support	$6,638,052	$13,627,615	$6,186,393
Total expenses	$3,330,885	$4,012,905	$4,004,605
Net assets	$42,831,603	$52,446,313	54,628,101

Source: Lakeshore Foundation. (2000). *Application to The United States Olympic Committee for Paralympic Training Site Designation for Basketball, Tennis, Rugby, Shooting Sports, Swimming and Weightlifting, February 2000.* Lakeshore Foundation.

Table 3

RQ2 Themes

Theme	Category 1	Category 2
Facility Accessibility	Athletic Facilities	Living Space
Personal Attention	Environmental Attribute	Functional Attribute
Focus on Paralympic Sport	N/A	N/A

Note: RQ2: Why do Paralympic athletes and teams choose to train at Lakeshore Foundation?

VITA

Joshua R. Pate studies sport for people with disabilities from a sport management perspective, examining facility access and program availability for individuals. Pate studies the interactions of people with disabilities in sport settings, specifically people with disabilities who are in predominantly able-bodied environments. He also has conducted studies related to sport venue access with regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition to sport and disability, Pate's research has covered intercollegiate athletics and sport communication. His active research agenda resulted in him being awarded the ESPN Doctoral Fellowship in the 2011-12 academic year.

As a doctoral student, Pate taught courses in sport communication and sport ethics at the University of Tennessee, in addition to the sport management introductory course. His courses ranged from 30-75 students and he used both lecture and discussion as a means to present material. He served as the graduate assistant for the sport management student organization at Tennessee, Partners in Sports, which had more than 160 members and generated more than $50,000 in scholarship funding in three years.

With regard to service, Pate began writing for *Ability Magazine* in 2004, covering topics such as the Paralympic movement, sport for Wounded Warriors, adaptive sport, and accessible travel. His writing work in accessible travel took him to Jamaica to explore accessible villas on the island's city of Montego Bay, examining how wheelchair users access villas. He also wrote a first-person account of learning to sit-ski at a camp for people with disabilities in Aspen, CO. In addition to freelance writing for *Ability Magazine*, Pate made it past the initial interview stage to be a London Games Maker volunteer for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Pate also

contributed to the University of Tennessee's athletic media relations office by working events and writing content for the official athletic department website.