

DDNJ Author Insights Episode 2: Dr. Samantha Ross and Bridgette Schram "Promoting Inclusion of Adults with Disabilities in Local Fitness Programs: A Needs Assessment"

Wed, 2/2 8:39AM • 47:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

bridgette, physical activity, people, disabilities, disability, samantha, article, community, research, inclusive, spaces, inclusion, program, authors, podcast, support, barriers, participants, opportunities, fitness

SPEAKERS

Matthew Wappett, Samantha Ross, Bridgette Schram

Matthew Wappett 00:15

Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the DDNJ author insights Podcast. I'm Dr. Matthew Wappett, the DDNJ Editor-in-Chief and Executive Director of the Utah State University Institute for Disability Research, Policy and Practice. And it's my privilege to host this podcast. Today, we're excited to have a conversation with Dr. Samantha Ross, faculty at West Virginia University, and Bridgette Schram, a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. Both Dr. Ross and Bridgette wrote an important article discussing some of the facilitators and barriers to including adults with disabilities in local fitness programs. We hope that you'll learn a little something from our conversation about the importance of creating inclusive fitness programs. But before we get into that conversation, I want to give you a bit of background on this podcast. This is a relatively new venture for the Developmental Disabilities Network Journal. The podcast, as I said at the beginning, is called the Author Insights Podcast, and it includes monthly interviews with authors from the latest issue of the journal. Each episode is structured as a conversation with the authors and provides a more informal opportunity for us to explore the author's article. But we also like to include some fun behind-the-scenes insight on the process of designing, implementing, and analyzing research. Research can be a pretty cut-and-dry process from the outside, and we kind of want to look at some of the mess that maybe happens on the other side and some of the fun stories and experiences that shape some of the research that we're publishing and DDNJ. So, we also want to acknowledge, through these conversations, that authors are more than just a name on the page. We want to help you get to know the people behind the publication. And we want to help you gain a better understanding of the many diverse voices who are working in the field today. And we want to provide some insight into what motivates these authors, provide opportunities to collaborate, and really, I think, open up some of the stuff that's just

happening out there in the disability research world today. COVID, we've mostly been shut up for almost two years. And a lot of these informal conversations that we would have had at conferences or at meetings, or other things, just haven't happened. And so hopefully, this podcast is a way to provide access to maybe some voices and some ideas that you wouldn't have access to now that we're living in this post COVID world and we're doing almost everything virtually. It's really hard to have a fortuitous conversation when you're sitting on Zoom all day. So anyway, it's incredibly exciting, and it is an honor for me to have the opportunity to visit with these authors who are featured in the journal, and I learned just a tremendous amount from these conversations, and I hope that you will too. Now before we jump in, and I give you the bio of our authors today, I'd like to encourage you to go and follow the podcast DDNJ Author Insights wherever you get your podcasts...Apple, Spotify, overcast Stitcher--lots of different ways to get podcasts these days. But please go in, like, follow us. We look forward to your reviews to your feedback. If you have feedback or thoughts on the podcast, you are welcome to email us here at the journal the email is editor.ddnj@aggies.usu.edu. So that's editor.ddnj@aggies.usu.edu. So, if you have thoughts, concerns, or feedback, please send those our way. We're always looking to make things better. So, without further ado, I want to jump into our conversation today. This episode of our podcast is, as I mentioned, a conversation with Dr. Samantha Ross and her coauthor, Bridgette Schram, about their article entitled "Promoting Inclusion of Adults with Disabilities in Local Fitness Programs: A Needs Assessment." This article can be found in the most recent issue of DDNJ, Volume Two, Issue One. So, by way of introduction, Dr. Samantha Ross is an assistant professor in the Physical Education Teacher Education program within the College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences at West Virginia University. Dr. Ross completed her doctoral training at Oregon State University, where she also received a Master of Public Health and Epidemiology. At Oregon State University, she served as coordinator for a peer mentor program partnering undergraduate students with adults with disabilities for weekly community-based physical activity. At WVU, she has partnered with the Center for Excellence in Disabilities to develop a peer-mentor Physical Activity and Health Program for post-secondary students with intellectual disabilities. Her goal as a researcher and an educator is to enhance the participation and opportunities of individuals with disabilities within physical activity and sport programs. I'm also joined today by Bridget Schramm. Bridget is a doctoral student in Public Health at Georgia State University, and she is also a graduate research assistant at the UCEDD at Georgia State, the Center for Leadership in disability. Bridget was a lead trainee in the 2020/2021 cohort and is active in the American Public Health Association Disability Section where she served as the student liaison. Bridget's research explores health disparities faced by people with disabilities, particularly examining how society constructs disabling environments that may prevent access and participation in the social determinants of health. Bridgette is also interested in the development and evaluation of community-based programs that support inclusive participation. She often applies these ideas and concepts to physical activity environments, which is supported by her master's in Kinesiology and her experience teaching and coaching individuals of all abilities.

Hi, everybody. Thanks for joining us today for the DD NJ author insights podcast. I am joined today by Dr. Samantha Ross from West Virginia University and by Bridgette Schramm, a PhD student at Georgia State University. Samantha and Bridgette were authors on an article in the most recent edition of the Developmental Disabilities Network Journal called "Promoting Inclusion of Adults with Disabilities in Local Fitness Programs: A Needs Assessment," and we're excited to welcome them here today. So welcome, Samantha and Bridgette.

Samantha Ross 07:39

Thank you, Matt. Happy to be here.

Matthew Wappett 07:40

Yeah. So, Samantha, why don't we start with you. Tell us a little bit about your background and the path that brought you to this project.

Samantha Ross 07:49

Yeah, absolutely. Um, I should start back in undergrad. I volunteered at an adapted horseback riding facility. And that's what really caught my attention in disability community services, and the impact that movement and physical activity can have on health, on social relationships, and some broader independence goals that individuals with disabilities are seeking through these service models. And that one of the students in my horseback riding class encouraged me to check out Oregon State University's Adaptive Physical Activity Program, which also is a community-based service that provides swim and gym opportunities for children with disabilities. So, I had questions as an instructor and a teacher. How do we most effectively teach Physical Activity in adapted settings for people with disabilities, and what factors or community resources do we need to put into place to make those opportunities inclusive and available for all individuals? So, I pursued my graduate studies at Oregon State University, where I had the opportunity to be the coordinator for a university-based program that paired adults with disabilities with undergraduate students for a peer-mentored physical activity once a week workout program. And in that experience will lead into this as we talk about our article. It was through that experience that more questions came up about how do we effectively do this? How do we partner with our community? What tools and resources do we need to have the most positive impact on individuals with disabilities?

Matthew Wappett 10:05

Awesome. We're gonna switch over to you, Bridgette. What about you? Tell us a little bit about your background and the path that brought you to this project?

Bridgette Schram 10:12

Yeah, so, Samantha mentioned, this project was done once I had returned back to school for my Masters. The road that took me back to my masters, again, takes place in the chapter before that, where I was doing community work and in physical activity and fitness centers or environments-- mainly in swimming and in strength-based environments. And through that opportunity, or through those experiences, I taught a lot of kids and adults with disabilities and realized that that was pretty rare. Every single time I worked with parents or like, there's very limited opportunities, and they were always very grateful. And while doing this, I just, I would go down rabbit holes trying to find ways to improve what I was doing. A lot of it is not something I'd seen--I would work with the parents, I was like I, the first time it ever happened, I told the parent, I was like, "I've never done this. I'm very open to doing this as long as you trust me." So that was how it kind of got started. And in my search for finding ways to do better, I came up for every single time. I found a lot of certifications that didn't really feel like they were going to give me much. And that's what led me back to school back to more education. And I found the program at Oregon State that offered some education in these areas. When I got there, I learned more about, you know, I got there thinking I needed to know diagnosis in order to better support. And I quickly learned through like the social model and all these things, that like, "No, I don't actually need to know these things." And that's the key one of the keys to inclusion--not doing separate environments but bringing them together. And so that's kind of where my work led me. And they do have these service-learning opportunities at Oregon State with a great opportunity to kind of get that practical experience. And so, when Samantha was working with this program, and was looking at kind of restructuring it, at the beginning or when I first started, I jumped on because I thought it'd be a great opportunity to practice. What could this look like? What could inclusion look like? How can we support organizations in the community to provide opportunities for people with disability?

Matthew Wappett 12:27

So, you've kind of you kind of addressed this in your response, both of you, but I'm curious, Bridgette, why are people with disabilities frequently excluded from fitness centers and initiatives? You know, along these lines?

Bridgette Schram 12:43

Yeah, I think there's a couple answers to that question. Within physical activity, well actually within disability in general, historical context is one of them. Within physical activity and fitness, there's the history and rehabilitation. So, for people with disabilities, oftentimes the first, and sometimes only avenue, they think of engaging in this activity and fitness is rehabilitation or environments, which puts a professional or clinician at like, at the lead, and it, it places it, so they are required to be there during these activities. And, therefore, individuals don't feel like they have that capability outside of that or underestimate their capabilities of being able to engage outside of that. So, I think that's one of the first contexts is that how historically, we've set up these environments. And then that also leads professionals and clinicians to feel like they need to have additional training to work with people with

disabilities in these environments. And so, if they don't have the experience, and they don't have the training, they just say that it's not something they're able to do, and, therefore, there's not many opportunities to engage. Um, Samantha, I know, we've discussed this a few times. So, she might have some ways to, to add into that as well.

Matthew Wappett 14:05

Absolutely.

Samantha Ross 14:07

Yeah. Thanks, Bridgette. And this is just my teacher hat on. It exactly is that historical context, which is where we see a lot of the oppressive systems or exclusionary systems rooted in. In the 1900s, disability services were very facility-based and separate. In the 1950s, we saw World War II vets return. That's where the term "Adapted Physical Education" first was coined, is in these rehabilitation models for disabled veterans. And the goals were really about fixing disability or reducing disability very much from that medical perspective. And as we got more laws like the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, there's a push for agencies to provide accessible and equitable opportunities in fitness settings or in physical activity services. But there are limitations of those laws around only structural accessibility or environmental barriers such as ramps, accessible bathrooms. And so, what Bridgette really touched on there was that wasn't supplemented with additional training, or perspective shifts in who can support individuals with disabilities and how we make inclusive spaces--both from an environmental standpoint, but also from an attitude, and kind of that more welcoming environment, which is what we're seeing today in a lot of fitness centers.

Matthew Wappett 15:46

So, we don't we don't want to give it away, because we want people to go read the article. But this kind of the launching off point for the work that you published in the article. So, can you give us a quick summary of your article in just two minutes?

Samantha Ross 16:00

Yes, so we were trying to answer these questions, how do we work with our community partners in physical activity, fitness, exercise settings, to increase the adoption of inclusive practices, so that adults with disabilities feel welcomed at fitness programs, and have the supports, they need to be successful? As part of our university-based program, where we paired undergraduate students as peer mentors for adults with disabilities and fitness. Originally, that design had those groups meeting at our Student Rec Center. The Student Rec Center is not open to the public, so we were approached by a board member and a parent of an adult with a disability to say, "How can we turn this on its head and get out in the community"? So, our needs assessment tried to get it those questions. What does that look like? What supports are in place? So, we partnered with seven organizations, and then went back to evaluate how

well that partnership went, what we could learn from it, and what those priorities could be moving forward to improve the program.

Matthew Wappett 17:19

Perfect. So, switching to you, Bridgette? What is the take home message from your article in the Developmental Disabilities Network Journal? What do you want readers to remember from this work?

Bridgette Schram 17:32

Yeah, so I think there's a couple things that we really strive to get at with our needs assessment. One is the impact, I think, really the importance of gauging stakeholder participation when developing interventions, especially when you're trying to show them something new, you know, when you're trying to get them to understand the concept that no one really understands what inclusion looks like, because there's not very many places that do it well. And it's an ever-evolving concept that we're going to have to continuously be assessing and improving. And so, when you're working with interventions, especially in these spaces, it's important to have all stakeholders on board. And that was basically what this community assessment was trying to do. This assessment, you know, was targeted at the community organizations to identify if they perceived our program being what we were intending it to be--how were we doing, and what we were doing well, and what they needed? But throughout this process, again, we were targeting the community partners. But we also learned the importance of all stakeholders in all of this as well. So even though that was who we were asking, we really learned that it's important to have, you know, the parents and the participants on board. It's important to have the volunteers voices, even as you're assessing these other components. And so, I think that's something you can read throughout the article. That's, being stressed and something important for people in intervention development and evaluation. And let's see, and then I think, as we were working with them, we had a couple learns ourselves that we think are very practical and that people could take away from them. One is that all of our community organizations were excited to be in this partnership, they all wanted to be there--they all chose to be there. And they all recognize that this would have a positive impact on the community and on their organization. However, with that, it kind of came out that a lot of them expected us to do the leg work of the inclusive part--like we would be inclusion and they would be the organization. I think that's good learn for future interventions and trying to intervene in this space of that dialogue and what that looks like and how to get people on board. And so, they were on board but they didn't know what that looked like so they would they leaned pretty heavily on us in those spaces. And then really, we had concerns about organizational capacity in order to be inclusive. And so, we don't necessarily have the answers for those. But these are the concerns in the organizations in the community. And if we want to improve inclusion in the community, we need to understand where they're coming from. So, I think the two major learnings would be in the process, making sure to include all stakeholders, and then just really being aware of where these communal organizations are coming from, so that way you can fully support them.

Matthew Wappett 20:28

Yeah. No, I think that that's so important. And I think it really speaks to just how deeply embedded that medical in that rehabilitation model is. It's like, yes, we want to participate. Yes, we want to be inclusive. But that's your job. Right? That's, that's, you know, the specialists do that. And yeah, the one thing that I really liked is just this idea of trying to shift that thinking to "this is a community responsibility." Community Inclusion isn't, you know, disability professionals coming in and creating a program, it's, you know, it's everybody's responsibility. And I think your article really points out some of the barriers and the needs that we need to consider when we're trying to create these programs. So, Samantha, did you want to add anything to that would, in terms of take-home messages from the article that you'd like people to remember?

Samantha Ross 21:26

I think Bridgette spoke really well to the communication piece, the stakeholder engagement, the gap between intention and practice. So, our community partners had buy in, they expressed that inclusion was part of their core mission and values. They wanted to see individuals with disabilities participate and saw the benefit for their instructors in terms of learning, increasing their skills and capacities, and building community within their organization. But as Bridgette spoke to, were really asked for resources around training and education. How do we do this? And how do we do this successfully? And that was where we started to play around with, "Well, what role does then our program have within this partnership, to be information sharing to provide training? And how can we integrate volunteers and hands on support with that transition into more inclusive settings"?

Matthew Wappett 22:43

Well, so that's actually a perfect lead into the next question. So, thanks for setting that up. But um, are there existing models or practices that can be used to make fitness programs more inclusive?

Samantha Ross 22:58

One of the resources we shared? Well, there's two pieces here. One, from a research perspective. There are frameworks for understanding what barriers and facilitators lead to increase participation of adults with disabilities in these spaces. So, what can we target or where do we need to reduce barriers to support individuals? The other piece of this is the practical part. What book of knowledge or training can we hand over to an organization that's going to increase their capacity and skill set in the day-to-day practice of supporting adults with disabilities? One resource we shared as part of the incentive for participating in our survey and interviews was from the..., it's called the "Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Programs and Policies and Implementation" manual. And that's from the National Center of Health, Physical Activity and Disability, or NCHPAD.

Bridgette, do you want to speak to some of the other kind of resources we used in designing or redesigning our program?

Bridgette Schram 24:17

Yeah. So, to reiterate, like Samantha said, we have kind of two different approaches. One is research and one is practical to this question. And I will say on the research side, as we were restructuring this program, another kind of framework I guess, that we relied on or used to like really drive how we were restructuring, was a framework by Rimmer and Roland, and it's a health promotion program dyad for people with disabilities that basically just has a loop on one side. It's a very simple framework, which is great. One side is empowering the person and then it has an arrow that leads to enabling the environment and then an arrow that leads back to empowering the person. So basically, just recognizing, in very simplistic terms, that we need to look at both sides of this. And we've seen in research, we often, I feel like a lot of the emphasis is placed on the person and not always in empowering ways. So, we create interventions. And so, I really appreciate this dyad because it looks at the person but finding ways to empower them and not just change their behavior, and then looks at the environment, which is actually where most of...if you look at literature regarding physical activity, and other things, but physical activity for people with disabilities, environmental barriers are the top thing that are listed. However, most of our interventions don't target there. And so, I think it's a good dyad to just point out that need. We also use the framework by Riley et al. in our article that kind of helps you assess and evaluate the adoption of inclusive practices within an organization and that just says: Step 1 is to assess the facility for barriers; 2 is review the report with stakeholder community; and then Step 3 is develop those action plans. And so that's actually exactly what we did in our article. And then practically, on top of what Samantha identified already, there's...NCHPAD is a great resource. NCHPAD is a CDC-funded health center located at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, and so they have a partnership with ACSM. Which, of course, as I say that I just blanked on what ACSM means, but it's one of the major strength and conditioning certifications in our country. So, if you are a certified personal trainer, this is most likely one of the certifications you have. So that's what that means. But they have a new certification for an inclusive fitness trainer. And then NCHPAD also has a commit to inclusion--which is more of an organizational level approach to making sure you're thinking about inclusion more in the backend of an organization. So that development, your mission, your policies, are you making sure that you're being inclusive, and how you're constructing that side. There's not as much literature on that, but they do have a framework to follow. So those are those are the main ones that kind of stuck out to me for this question.

Matthew Wappett 27:24

Yeah. Awesome. Thank you. Yeah, we'll make sure to link to those resources, NCHPAD come up a couple of times and we'll get those links and we'll put those in the show notes so that when folks go to this, they can go to the show notes and hopefully link to some of these additional resources that

you've mentioned. So, one of the things that we're trying to do on this podcast is paint a little bit of a picture of what happens behind the scenes. You know articles, research, and everything is fine and dandy, but it doesn't always share the fun, interesting things that happen kind of as you're going through the process. So, one of the questions that we like to ask is, was there a memorable event or story or something funny that happened, as you worked on this project, gathered the data, wrote the article--anything that really, you know, made this project memorable for you. So why don't we start with you, Samantha?

Samantha Ross 28:30

Yes, what I love about this project is (1), Bridgette and I were both research participants. So, I was the coordinator for the program, Bridgette played a role as an assistant but also an instructor in one of the fitness classes. So, we had hands-on and very personal experiences with our partners, and with our adult with disabilities participants. So, it becomes much more motivating to be part of projects that are community driven. And this project came from a parent who raised their voice and said, "I have some concerns about how this program is structured and what goals we're working towards." So, to be able to then respond to that and be part of a bigger initiative really had an impact on who I am as a researcher, and where I continued my education and my skills. As a memorable example, we had one particular adult with disability participant or self-advocate, who stood up and really raised his voice around what he wanted to see in one of our fitness facilities, and volunteer to be the first to check out this new personal trainer gym style program. So, he was first in the door and built a relationship with the director of that program. He then attended our stakeholder meeting and spoke up about what that process had been like, where the gaps were, what they had learned together in the process. And then we actually invited and supported him in going to AUCD conference to then present on the program findings. So that, for me, has been the most rewarding and all of this, that this was community driven, this uplifted the voices of adults with disabilities. And it really was humbling for me as a researcher, to better understand where those questions need to come from, and what my personal role is, as a person without a disability and as a researcher.

Matthew Wappett 30:57

That's amazing. And I do like that whole, just participatory community-driven aspect of it. Sometimes you don't...those origin stories about where it came from, and those people raising their voices, unfortunately, is frequently not always reflected, I think, in what we end up publishing. So, thanks for sharing that, Samantha. What about you, Bridgette, it sounds like you were a regular participant in this too. What's something memorable that you recall from working on this project?

Bridgette Schram 31:26

Yeah, so there's some overlap between mine and Samantha's. But I did have the opportunity to be part of one of the weekly classes that we were offering for the participants. And so that was fun. It's a good

reminder of how I got into higher education, again, and I'm able to apply some of the things I've been learning and see how it can look in these spaces and actually try it. And just, you know, there's a reason why I fell in love in working with people with disabilities and physical activity spaces. And it's because it's the same reason I love those spaces for myself--it's a great way to stretch your limits, and you know, try new things that maybe you wouldn't if you have the right supports, and so I was able to witness a lot of that within the class that I helped support and worked with. And the young man who was able to attend AUCD with us was actually one of those participants. So, him and I, you know, we got to know each other. He was definitely one of those that just like, grabbed on and like improved so much and was really get into it and you could tell his confidence grew. And you could see that Ben and his ability and interest in speaking up about his experience and being willing to go to Washington, DC, in order to help present and, and then in Washington, DC, he was really interested in like checking out the city but had never used public transportation in a large city like that. So, his mom and I, and him then went out and I like showed them how to use the public transit in DC one day, and we just did like a loop. And then they went on and like used it on their own to explore a little bit. And so, it was really fun to be able to see personal growth that he had had through the program that then extended outside of his activity, which is one of the reasons that I do work in outside of physical activity as well. But I always come back to it because I think it's one of a great space to kind of improve self-determination, and, you know, confidence and learn what you're capable of, or learn how to test your limits. And so, yeah, anyway, so it was a great project to be involved in that kind of lumped all of my interests and allowed me to see my growth.

Matthew Wappett 33:44

Thanks for sharing that story. Again, these aren't things that are reflected in sometimes an article. And so, hearing about these, I think makes it more of that personal connection with the research. So, thank you. So, you've kind of touched on this, and it's kind of come through in a few of your responses, but you know, everybody who's working in this field has a reason. Right? So, what motivates you to do this work? So, we'll begin with you Bridgette, because we went with Samantha last time, but what motivates you to do this work? Why do you do what you do?

Bridgette Schram 34:18

Yeah, that's a that's a great question Matt. You know, I did get into academia and higher education, again, trying to look how to improve, how to be more inclusive, and what that actually looks like. That is something I still do to this day. Like here in Atlanta I work with an organization in the city in teaching swimming whenever I can pre COVID and hopefully here again soon. So that's the way I remind myself of why I get into it. But working in disability inclusion...I've learned so much. And in this process, since I've returned back to school, I learned so much from the people around me from colleagues like Samantha that allow me...you know, we have really great discussions in trying to work through what this inclusive space looks like. I'm a bigger picture thinker. And so being creative and trying to imagine

these spaces is fun to me. What's not fun is trying to convince people the importance of it. But that's something that I'm...that's a skill. You know that that's the important part that I enjoy when they understand but you know, when you come into contact that without it can be more frustrating, but yeah, I'm a bigger picture thinker, I love thinking about these inclusive spaces, and then learning from all the people in the field and better involved. So that's academic colleagues, the individuals that we work with in the activity environments--I'm part of UCEDD here at Georgia State, so the Center for Leadership in Disability. I've learned so much from my colleagues here, and I was a LEND trainee, and we actually have quite a few self-advocates and family advocates, and I think those are the people that I've learned the most from and my entire experience. And so that challenged me to rethink what I think I know, and how things look. And I enjoy that process and appreciate the honesty that's in this field.

Matthew Wappett 36:18

Thank you. Yeah, that's, um, yeah, I think those are, yeah, just incredible. And it's, you're lucky to be there in Georgia, some of the good folks who work at the UCEDD there are good friends. So yeah, that's exciting. So, Samantha, what about you? What, what motivates you to do this work? Why do you do what you do?

Samantha Ross 36:37

In thinking about this podcast and what to share, I was really struck with how humbled I was by this whole experience and how I've done a lot of personal growth as a researcher and teacher over the past couple years, in breaking down some of those barriers of what it means to do research, what it means to provide disability services, who's the expert at the table. So, I think at the core of everything I do is I'm a lifelong learner. And I'm motivated to learn from others, much like what Bridgette's talked about. And I also am strongly motivated by the value and the benefit of physical activity. So how big a role that plays in our overall wellbeing, our social relationships, our health and fitness, from a lifetime perspective, and recognizing and learning from others, how many barriers there are to experiencing those benefits. So, I think at the core of what motivates me is that you're frustrated with the barriers out there, and I want to be a positive impact on that change. And in engaging in this work, I grow personally and professionally, and I can carry that into my classroom, where I am teaching and discovering with future teachers, or future professionals, what this space could look like, how can we reimagine inclusion in fitness and physical activity? And how can we be leaders in making that change?

Matthew Wappett 38:24

Yeah, you both brought this up. But I do agree that we just have not done a good job at really including people with disabilities in fitness in discussions about physical health and everything else. I mean, that's one of the largest areas of health disparity in our country today. We've focused so much on services and serving people and not with, you know, this physical activity, which anybody who engages

in physical activity and exercise knows, like Bridgette brought up, it's incredibly empowering. Right? And it helps you develop those self-advocacy skills, and that self-determination, and everything else. And so, yeah, this whole aspect of physical activity and fitness, I think, has been missing, in many ways, for a long time from this disability field. So, thank you so much for bringing this to the forefront and for the work that you're doing in this area. So, the last question that we've got is, um, you know, one of the things we're trying to do at this journal and with research in general is trying to make research more inclusive and accessible and get information out in a broader sort of a way. And so, we're asking everybody on the podcast to share one thing that you've been doing to make your work more inclusive and accessible. So outside of this work in fitness and that, what have you been doing in your day-to-day life to make your work more inclusive and accessible? We'll start with you, Samantha.

Samantha Ross 39:58

Yeah, Matt, to build off what you were sharing, one thing that's really come to my attention is we've been missing people with disabilities in the discussion of physical activity, and we've been missing people with disabilities in the design of research, around health, around physical activity, disability services. And I will say, even with this project here, we had a big learning moment where this participant stepped forward and raised their voice at our stakeholder meeting. And I really had to take a step back and say, "Why wasn't that invited earlier"? In our programming and developing process. So in my day to day, I've really taken that to heart and really thought, "Okay, if I've got a new project coming up, or we're working in a new community partnership, who's at the table, and what role can I play in bringing people to the table so it's more inclusive, and who's part of the idea development, the decision-making process, and in that same way, we're becoming more accessible in who information is then shared back to"? And in what outlets we are sharing research, connecting findings, or building programs as a partnership with people with disabilities?

Matthew Wappett 41:24

Yeah. What about you, Bridgette? What have you been doing to make your work more accessible and inclusive?

Bridgette Schram 41:30

Yeah, so as Samantha said, this is an ongoing process, because when we're taught these methods, it's not something that's integrated. It's talked about, like CBPR and things, but you can integrate people with disabilities without doing a full-fledged CBPR. So that's community-based participatory research on design, which tends to be a more resource intensive design, and so it's not really taught. So, I will admit, this is an ongoing learning process, and I appreciate, you know, being able to collaborate with other professionals that are interested in assessing like Samantha and I afterward like, "alright, this was great, but we could have included these voices earlier." So, making sure we're being critical about our own research. So that's something that one method I've been doing. I think it's also important to

recognize what my contributions are in this space. So, as someone that doesn't identify as having a disability, like I don't know what those experiences are firsthand. And the only way I'm going to know is by including and by listening. And so, recognizing (1) that when I entered this space, my contribution is as a trained researcher, and knows I have expertise in research, design, statistics. How can we answer these questions? How can we prove this as a problem? That's where I really come in. But when it comes to what these questions should be, and how are we intervening, and what are the interventions, what do they look like? I can have ideas, but I don't know if those ideas are correct, unless I have the voices of the people that it's supposed to be supporting. And there's there are studies that show that interventions can actually increase disparities if they're not designed well and not designed more upstream. So, I think, because it just it basically creates more systematic ways for people to be oppressed. So, I think it's important for me to check my skills and what I'm bringing to the table and making sure, throughout that process, that I'm listening, and asking what needs to be involved. Really tangible ways is again, other than listening, I've also been really interested in dissemination. So, I got into research again, because I couldn't find what I was looking for when I was in the community doing practical work. So how do we get this stuff outside of just academic papers that not everyone can access and get it to people who are actually doing this work, which is why I really appreciate this journal and this podcast, just another way to disseminate that information and infographics is one way that I'm trying to expand and make infographics and research that I do in order to distribute and disseminate outside of just who might read it in professional and academic spaces.

Matthew Wappett 44:22

Yeah. Well, thank you both for coming on today. I would agree with both of you that, you know, that community-based participatory research or participatory action research, or whatever you want to call it, is just so incredibly important. And that's why we're really excited when we saw your article come in, because, you know, not a lot of people...a lot of people who are doing that participatory research aren't publishing it, you know. It's very practical and focused on what's happening on the ground, and so it's rare to see it. It's still rare to see a lot of these articles being published out there. So, yours, I think, was a great example of what that looks like and how you involve a whole community and really trying to address a significant barrier for people with disabilities in our community. So, I want to thank both of you for your time today. Any last thoughts before we wrap up?

Samantha Ross 45:16

I'd love to give a shout out to our colleagues...our other co-authors who are still at Oregon State continuing this work. Kay McCarty took over coordinator of the program and implemented more trainings, and communications with our community partners, and actually extended some of that empowerment work. So that it our participants with disabilities were part of that development and building more advocacy skills. Willie Leung and Nicole Fiscella. And then we have the joy of working with an undergraduate student, Kayla Lindland, who was a volunteer and really central to rebuilding

this program. So, we're so appreciative. Jonathan Jensen was our participant and self-advocate who stepped forward and presented at AUCD. And we're so grateful for his input.

Matthew Wappett 46:12

Awesome. And yeah, if you go to the journal, we'll include a link to the article in this podcast episode. And yeah, the names and contact information for I believe all those authors were there on the journal. But yeah, there's a large Oregon State University contingent on this one. Sounds like you both have connections there. So yeah, but thank you so much for your time today. Thanks for joining us. And yeah, we're just keep doing the good work that you're doing. Thanks for everything. As always, thank you for listening. Please make sure you subscribe to the podcast on your favorite podcast app. As I said, we'll be putting out new episodes monthly, so this will be regularly updated. So, whether you listen on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, Overcast, or something else, please subscribe so that you don't miss an episode. Also, please make sure that you leave us a rating and a review. Your feedback helps us make the podcast better and will help more people find us. And then finally, please, because this is new, share this podcast with your friends, your family, your colleagues, and others who might be interested in these conversations that we're going to be having.