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Review

Sport event legacy: A systematic quantitative review of literature

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ABSTRACT

The study of sport event legacies has grown rapidly since 2000 across a number of disciplines related to planning and hosting large-scale sport events. However, to date, there have been limited attempts to systematically review and synthesise extant sport event legacy research, reflect on existing knowledge, and identify key gaps for future research. In this article, the authors reviewed the state of sport event legacy research through a systematic quantitative review of 305 original, peer-reviewed research articles published in English language journals between 2000 and 2016. Results demonstrate that a small group of academics concentrated in particular countries are driving the publication of studies on sport event legacy in predominately specialised sport and event journals. There is a clear research interest in legacy outcomes realised through hosting sport events in areas of public life, politics, and culture, as well as mass participation sport. The authors identify key areas for future research and make recommendations for empirical research designs to progress scholarship and better inform policy and practice pertaining to sport event legacy.

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1. Introduction

Since the early 2000s, interest in sport event legacies has grown exponentially, and the idea of realising sport and non-sport legacies from hosting large-scale sport events has become central to the rhetoric and practice of event bid committees, event governing bodies, and host governments (Leopkey & Parent, 2016; Preuss, 2007; Ritchie, 2000; Veal, Toohey, & Frawley, 2012). Preuss (2007) defined sport event legacies as the “planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself” (p. 211). Sport event legacies are typically associated with sport events of a scale that require significant investment in infrastructure and urban development, have international media exposure, and attract large numbers of tourists. In this paper, we use the term large-scale sport events to describe events such as the Olympic Games, Football World Cup, and Commonwealth Games.

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Whereas Preuss' definition of legacy accommodates for negative outcomes, political rhetoric around large-scale sport events has predominately focused on the realisation of long-term and positive benefits. Consequently, over the past two decades, there has been increasing sophistication in policy approaches to legacy planning by event bid committees, event governing bodies, and host governments (Rogerson, 2016; VanWynsberghe, 2015). These entities often spruik the return on investment of public monies spent on large-scale sport events through the achievement of positive legacies. Yet, recently there appears to have been a backlash from the residents of cities and nations bidding for major sport events. For example, Budapest, Rome, and Hamburg all withdrew their bids for the 2024 Olympic Games. The Hamburg bid was withdrawn after a referendum (BBC News, 2015), while the Budapest bid was withdrawn after polls suggested a growing number of Hungarians were opposed to the bid on the grounds that hosting the event would be unaffordable and could invite corruption (Dunai, 2017; Pells, 2017). Further, the staging of the 2022 Commonwealth Games was thrown into disarray in 2017 when hosting rights were stripped from Durban, South Africa, after preparations were marred with financial problems and missed deadlines (ABC News, 2017). These scenarios suggest that unsubstantiated political rhetoric around the benefits of large-scale sport events is problematic, and that decision making regarding bidding for and hosting such events could benefit from empirically grounded understandings of what is probable in terms of legacies, as well as what is required to realise legacies.

The continued promotion of sport event legacies by event governing bodies and host city proponents has led to a growth of theoretical and empirical studies across a number of disciplines. These include: urban planning (Essex & Chalkley, 2004; Kassens-Noor, Wilson, Muller, Maharaj, & Huntoon, 2015; Smith, 2014); event management (Leopkey & Parent, 2012; Masterman, 2014; Ritchie, 2000); sport management (Reis, Frawley, Hodgetts, Thomson, & Hughes, 2017; Toohey, 2008; Veal et al., 2012); tourism (Ferrari & Guala, 2015; Weed, 2014); and health (McCartney, Hanlon, & Bond, 2012; Murphy & Bauman, 2007). Across the range of disciplines, academic researchers have invested efforts in understanding the concept of legacy, the processes that facilitate or inhibit legacy outcomes, and the value of such outcomes to sport event stakeholders (Getz & Page, 2016; Leopkey & Parent, 2016; Rogerson, 2016; Thomson, Schlenker, & Schlenker, 2013). Some types of legacy have attracted more interest than others, and authors have carried out literature reviews to consolidate extant knowledge in the specific areas of physical activity and sport participation legacies (c.f. Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Weed et al., 2009, 2015), Paralympic legacy (c.f. Misener, Darcy, Legg, & Gilbert, 2013), and volunteer management in events (c.f. Kim & Cuskelly, 2017). However, to date, few researchers have systematically reviewed and synthesised the broader extent of sport event legacy research in order to strategically reflect on existing academic knowledge and identify key gaps for future research (Weed, 2005; Weed et al., 2009, 2015).

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to provide a systematic review and synthesis of sport event legacy research. This purpose was achieved through a systematic quantitative literature review of peer-reviewed sport event legacy research published in English language journals between 2000 and 2016. By highlighting trends and gaps in extant research, such a review could have the potential to “play an important role in disseminating research knowledge and in shaping further research, policy, practice and public perception” (Suri, 2014, p. 2).

In the following section, we explain and justify the suitability of the established systematic quantitative literature review technique we used and how we applied it to achieve our research purpose. We examine the bibliographic details of articles, the types of legacies researchers have studied, the focus of those studies, theoretical and methodological approaches, and key findings across the breadth of the sport event legacy research. In so doing, we contribute an overview of extant sport event legacy research to examine progress to date, provide commentary on research trends and gaps, and set out key areas for future research to advance knowledge in, and approaches to sport event legacy.

2. Approaches to literature reviews

Literature reviews are an important tool for interpreting, classifying, organising, condensing, and synthesising a collection of separate publications pertaining to a similar topic (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009). Literature reviews can provide insights into the state of research in a field, acknowledging the body of past research which may have continuing value to, and informing efficient efforts in, research (Weed, 2005). There are two main types of literature review: narrative literature reviews and systematic literature reviews, with each type having a range of approaches and methodologies, as summarised in Table 1. Choosing an approach and method should be based on the objectives of the research, and balanced against the availability of financial and human resources (Cooper et al., 2009; Wakefield, 2015).

Within the sport and event management fields, narrative literature reviews have been the most common type of review, although scholars have increasingly recognized the utility of systematic reviews, which were established in the health and science fields (see Schlenker, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016; Weed et al., 2009, 2015). Researchers can design systematic literature reviews to incorporate reviews of both quantitative and qualitative studies, and, as such, are more inclusive of different types of research than sometimes realised (Petticrew, 2001; Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Weed, 2005; Whittemore & Knaf, 2005). Petticrew (2001) explained that systematic reviews are a methodology that “aims to limit bias, and the choice of which study designs to include is a choice that is made by reviewers” (p. 99). For instance, systematic literature reviews may incorporate vote counting and quasi-statistical approaches, which scholars implement to categorise, quantify, and identify trends in disciplinary and theoretical approaches, research designs, and key findings (Whittemore & Knaf, 2005). Common areas for analysis in systematic literature reviews include the number and type of papers dedicated to a topic which assists in highlighting gaps in the research and potential areas for future development (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). The application of a systematic quantitative literature review is appropriate in research contexts which might reflect a “chaotic brickyard”

Table 1
Comparison of Narrative and Systematic Literature Reviews.

	Narrative Literature Reviews	Systematic Literature Reviews
Aim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad summary and critique of the literature available on a range of issues within a given topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses particular research questions through critical assessment of all research available on that topic.
Methodological approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for including, or excluding pieces of literature rarely detailed. • Processes and decision-making regarding the collecting of literature and conclusions arrived at rarely detailed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for methodological transparency and reliability. • Search is systematic and comprehensive and in some cases may be based on predetermined criteria.
Output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General literature reviews, theoretical literature reviews, methodological literature reviews, or historical reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meta-analysis, rapid review, meta-summary, meta-synthesis, combined or integrated review, and systematic quantitative review.

(Source: compiled from: Gentles et al., 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016; Petticrew, 2001; Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Weed, 2005; Whittemore & Knaf, 2005).

(Weed, 2005, p. 83); that is, when the field being reviewed has a variety of disciplines, topics of inquiry, theoretical frameworks, and research designs. In such scenarios, Weed (2005) considered systematic quantitative literature review approaches as applicable to for synthesising research (i.e., bringing bricks together) within the broader field of sport management to build understandings and knowledge (i.e., building a wall).

Consequently, in this study, we implemented an established systematic quantitative literature review approach (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). A systematic quantitative literature review is systematic in that the reviewer follows a structured method to build a project scope, survey the literature and build the sample of literature to be analysed. These characteristics enable the reviewer to consider the “different combinations of locations, subjects, variables, and responses” which have been examined in the extant research (Pickering & Byrne, 2014, p. 538). The systematic quantitative literature review is also quantitative in that the reviewer measures the existing research across a range of categories, which helps to summarise and observe patterns in extant knowledge and identify research gaps (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

The Pickering and Byrne (2014) approach encourages researchers to follow a 15-step process to develop, implement, and present their systematic quantitative literature review. While Pickering and Byrne’s (2014) process is mostly consistent with other documented processes for systematic literature reviews, it has more detailed steps compared to Whittemore and Knaf’s (2005) five step approach, or Wakefield’s (2015) seven step approach. In addition, rather than applying a pre-determined categorisation framework to the sample of articles, Pickering and Byrne (2014) encourage researchers to approach the development of the categorisation framework as an iterative and inductive process. They suggest researchers first examine a proportion of the literature sample (i.e. 10 percent) to identify potential categories through which to categorise and quantify the entire sample of literature. This approach is unique to the Pickering and Byrne (2014) model. It is an important aspect of their model, as it means the reviewer can develop a framework of categories based on characteristics and trends emergent in the literature, which may subsequently assist with summarising research across multiple disciplines. This is a key trait of the systematic quantitative literature review approach that sets it apart from more positivist systematic literature review approaches, in which assessment frameworks are typically developed deductively and therefore limit the ability for exploration of emergent characteristics and themes which may be evident across the literature (Gentles, Charles, Nicholas, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2016).

Pickering and Byrne (2014) recommend the systematic quantitative literature review approach for “emerging areas and for areas where methodological approaches are so diverse that there is limited potential for other types of quantitative reviews” (p. 539). The phenomenon of sport event legacy is a relatively new area of academic inquiry that spans multiple disciplines, topics of interest and methodological approaches and hence is suited to Pickering and Byrne’s (2014) systematic quantitative literature review model.

2.1. Research aims

The objective of this paper was to review and synthesise the state of sport event legacy research. To deliver on this objective, we identified the following sub-questions to guide the development and implementation of the systematic quantitative literature review:

Research Objective 1: Who has conducted sport event legacy research, when and where?

Research Objective 2: What types of sport event legacies have been explored, and what has been the focus of these investigations?

Research Objective 3: What types of theoretical frameworks have informed the research?

Research Objective 4: What approaches to research design have been used?

Research Objective 5: Are there patterns in the findings?

Research Objective 6: What are the gaps in the research?

Our application of the systematic quantitative literature review technique was systematic in that it followed a structured method to survey the literature and build the sample of literature to be analysed. This approach enabled us to consider the “different combinations of locations, subjects, variables, and responses” which have been examined in extant research (Pickering & Byrne, 2014, p. 538). Our application of the systematic quantitative literature review was also quantitative in that the research team measured the existing research across a range of categories, helping to summarise current knowledge and identify research gaps (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). We describe our application of the Pickering and Byrne (2014) systematic quantitative literature review approach below.

3. Research method

3.1. Defining and compiling the sample of literature

The sport event legacy literature suffers from a lack of consistent terminology and definitions (Cashman, 2006; Pentifallo & VanWynsberghe, 2015; Thomson et al., 2013). Hence, defining key concepts was an important point of deliberation by the research team. For instance, while the majority of sport event legacy scholars use the term *legacy*, Hiller (2000) preferred the term ‘outcome’ and more recently Preuss (2007) and Gratton and Preuss (2008) use the term ‘structure’ when discussing legacy.

During the conceptualisation of this study, the lead researcher, Dr Alana Thomson, ran an exploratory search based on a range of terms often used interchangeably with ‘legacy’ in the literature (i.e., impact, outcome, consequence, benefit, develop and transform). This exploratory search returned over one thousand possible articles and highlighted the tension between incorporating a range of distinct but related terms, and creating a valid boundary for what was to be included or excluded within the systematic quantitative literature review (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). Dr Thomson brought a sample of abstracts from the articles identified using the broad list of search terms to the research team for its consideration. We agreed that to adhere to the systematic nature of the systematic quantitative literature review and achieve a manageable sample of literature, the key words in this study would be limited to ‘sport,’ ‘event,’ and ‘legacy.’

This strategic selection of search terms is justified both conceptually and methodologically. Conceptually, researchers have recently highlighted differences between concepts such as ‘event impacts’ and ‘event legacies’ (Preuss, 2015), and other researchers indicate the term ‘legacy’ is now widely accepted in academia, industry, and media (Brown & Getz, 2015; Sant & Mason, 2015). Methodologically, these search terms allowed a higher degree of certainty in the commonality of literature in the sample (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). Accordingly, our search of electronic journal databases required that the terms ‘sport AND event AND legacy’ be present in the key fields of the title, abstract, or keywords.

3.2. Literature sample

The final sample included 305 articles, arrived at after a comprehensive literature search and an assessment of articles to determine inclusion in the final sample. Fig. 1 provides details of the initial search results, exclusion criteria, and the final sample.

As summarised visually in Fig. 1, a comprehensive literature search initially retrieved 409 articles which met two key criteria at this initial stage in line with the systematic quantitative literature review technique, including articles needed to be, full-text papers, peer-reviewed, and published (i.e., assigned volume/issue/page numbers, as opposed to a digital identifier) in academic journals only, between January 2000 and December 2016. This decision meant we excluded other academic works (e.g., books, book chapters, conference papers, theses) and grey literature (e.g., reports, newspaper articles, other unpublished works) so as to maintain a targeted focus on the review of academic peer-reviewed research. We chose 2000 as the starting point for the timeframe because conceptual development and debate concerning sport event legacy appeared to emerge at the beginning of the 21st Century (de Moragas et al., 2002; Thomson et al., 2013). The year 2000 also coincided with the hosting of the Sydney Olympic Games amid criticism of the lack of legacies perceived by host residents (Lenskyj, 2002).

We initially searched Google Scholar search, as this search engine is a viable source to support the systematic review of research across a range of topics and disciplines (Gentles et al., 2016; Harzing & van der Wal, 2008). A database was created with the Google Scholar results, and the reference lists of these articles were checked for further articles which did not show up in the initial search, but which featured the term ‘legacy’ in the title. We also ran the same search through a second electronic database to ensure we had captured an adequate representation of the population of articles from which to develop our sample. We used Scopus, an Elsevier product, and self-reported to be the largest database of peer-reviewed literature (Elsevier, 2018). Other scholars have used Scopus in their systematic reviews (e.g., Kim & Cuskelly, 2017; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). This secondary search revealed additional articles not included in the Google Scholar search. We added these articles to the database, and a review of the Scopus articles’ reference lists led to the identification of a further seven articles with ‘legacy’ in the title. Given the small number of articles returned in this final check, we did not carry out further literature searches. Upon review, we realised the Google Scholar search had included six articles which were available with digital object identifiers but had not been assigned to a journal volume. We removed these articles from the sample.

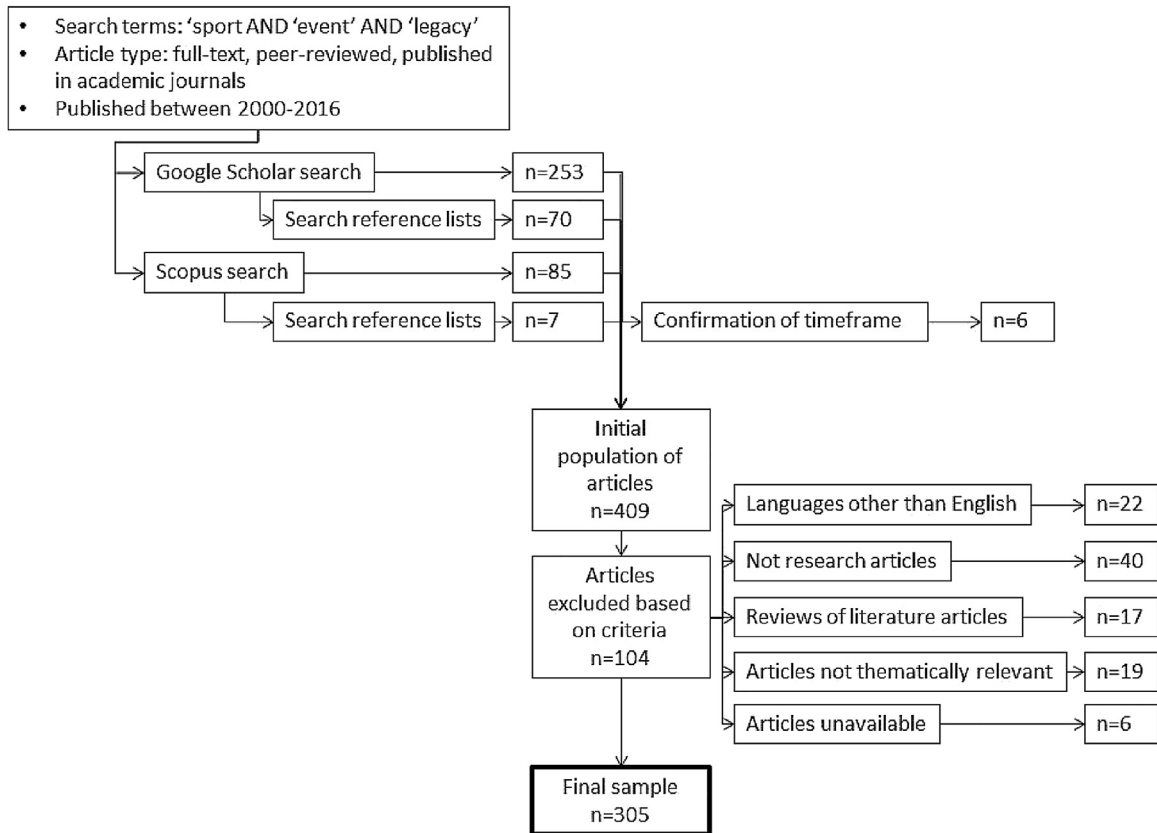


Fig. 1. Process followed to construct literature sample.

Dr Thomson reviewed and assessed all 409 retrieved articles against criteria agreed by the research team to determine their inclusion in the final sample. These criteria included restricting articles to those published in the English language to enable analysis by the research team. Based on this language criterion, we excluded 22 articles written in languages other than English (i.e., French, Spanish, Norwegian, Italian, Danish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Polish). In line with the systematic quantitative literature review approach, we excluded 40 editorials, book reviews, or teaching case studies from the sample. We also excluded 17 articles that constituted reviews of literature, to maintain a focus on original research material (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). Finally, on a case-by-case basis, we excluded a further 19 articles which met the key word criteria but that, upon review, were not relevant to this study. In the first instance, we excluded articles which focused on a non-sport event (e.g. expositions or cultural events). In the second instance, we excluded articles in which the term 'legacy' was used to refer to the legacy of a person, the historic legacy of political decisions, where 'legacy' was part of the name of a tobacco research archive, or where chemicals used on a golf course were termed 'legacy chemicals.' There were a further six articles which could not be located or accessed despite web-based and library-based searches. This final sample of 305 articles (refer Appendix A) was slightly more than Pickering and Byrne's (2014) suggested upper limit of 300 articles for systematic quantitative literature reviews.

3.3. Summarising the literature: categories and extraction approach

A summary of the categorisation framework utilised is included in Table 2, listing categories, category descriptions and the relevant methods for extracting data from the sample of articles. This framework was compiled through a combination of core systematic quantitative literature review categories of author(s), year of publication, journal, geographical location of the lead researcher and research approach, as well as a review of a proportion of the literature sample (i.e. 10 percent) to identify meaningful categories by which to sort and quantify the remaining literature (c.f. Pickering & Byrne, 2014). Our review of 30 randomly selected articles from our sample saw us agree on three categories meaningful to the phenomenon of sport event legacy. These were the 'type of legacy,' 'focus of the legacy investigation,' and 'key findings.'

In order to classify articles based on 'type of legacy' examined, we applied Veal et al.'s (2012) legacy typology (based on Cashman, 2003) as a guide, as well as allowing new categories to emerge through the review process. In line with the purpose of our systematic quantitative literature review, we selected Veal et al.'s (2012) typology as it focuses specifically on the range of legacy topics, as opposed to other legacy typologies such as Preuss's (2007) Legacy Cube which focuses more

Table 2

Description of categories and extraction method.

Category	Description	Extraction method
Lead author, affiliation and country	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First author; • Country of the first author's organisational affiliation 	Direct extraction
Year of publication	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year the article was published 	Direct extraction
Journal	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic journal in which the article was published 	Direct extraction
Article title Type of Legacy	Article titles extracted from the articles and loaded into NVivo for word frequency analysis Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of legacy they were principally investigating; • Abstracts and keywords primarily reviewed, in the absence of this information, Introduction reviewed. • Where articles investigated perceptions of multiple legacies and details of concepts or indicators not provided in abstract, reviewed method and findings sections for categorisation. • Articles could be coded to multiple 'types of legacy'. 	Direct extraction Direct extraction, and/or interpretation
Focus of legacy investigation	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of the legacy investigation; • Abstracts and keywords primarily reviewed, in the absence of this information, Introduction reviewed. • Articles could be coded to multiple 'foci'. 	Interpretation
Research approach	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research approach (i.e. qualitative, quantitative, mixed method or conceptual/theoretical). A fifth category emerged through categorisation – Case studies, no method detailed. • Abstracts/keywords primarily reviewed, in the absence of this information, Method/Research Design reviewed. • Discrete categorisation, only one category per article. 	Direct extraction, interpretation
Key findings	Articles categorised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key findings presented in the articles; • Abstracts primarily reviewed, in the absence of this information, Conclusion reviewed. • Articles could be coded to multiple 'key findings'. 	Interpretation

generally on the nature of legacies (i.e., positive, negative, planned, unplanned etc.). [Veal et al.'s \(2012\)](#) article has also been cited over 100 times according to Google Scholar, indicating the typology to be credible. The reading of the initial sample of articles also highlighted diversity in the 'focus of the legacy investigation.' The variability included ways to define and conceptualise sport event legacies ([Chappelet, 2012](#); [Preuss, 2007](#)), planning for and managing legacies ([Leopkey & Parent, 2015, 2016](#)), and evaluating legacies ([Dickson, Benson, & Blackman, 2011](#); [Pentifallo & VanWynsberghe, 2015](#)). We categorised each article's focus through inductive coding.

Finally, 'key findings' were categorised through a combination of deduction, based on previous conceptualisations of legacy ([Preuss, 2007](#); [Thomson et al., 2013](#)), and induction, enabling new findings to emerge through the data. As a consequence of combining deductive and inductive methods, the categorisation process had to be approached iteratively to ensure the categorisation of articles in the sample was consistent. We also implemented a rigorous code-checking system across the research team, with coding and interpretations debated and consensus reached throughout the process.

Once the research team established and validated categories, Dr Thomson reviewed the whole sample of articles for a second time to check consistency of categorisation. Due to the large number of articles included in the study, we used NVivo 11 as a data management tool to store, code, and categorise articles. Doing so allowed us to review coding summaries to compare and contrast how articles were categorised and discuss categorisations that were subject to interpretation. We then exported the data to an Excel spreadsheet to run frequencies and visualise the data. There were two points of analysis in which we utilised NVivo analytics functions, including the Word Frequency function, detailed under findings Section 4.1.4, and the Coding Matrix coding function to look at the patterns in coding across 'legacy types' and 'focus of investigation', detailed under findings Section 4.2.3, specifically [Table 6](#).

3.4. Limitations

There were three main limitations we identified in relation to the application of the systematic quantitative literature review technique in this study. First, defining boundaries for systematic and transparent inclusion and exclusion of research works in this systematic quantitative literature review presented limitations. Our search for key words (i.e., 'sport,' 'event,'

and 'legacy') in key fields (i.e., title, abstract, keywords) means we excluded some articles of conceptual relevance. For instance, one of the co-author's own publications (i.e., [Toohey, 2010](#)), which discusses legacy through the body of the article, was not included in the sample as the word legacy was not included in the title or abstract, and the journal did not include keywords. In addition, the keywords selected meant that articles that might discuss the idea of 'legacy,' but which use different terminology (i.e., impact, outcome, consequence, benefit, develop and transform) have been excluded from our sample. Concomitantly, the key words selected also means that some articles which met our sampling criteria, may not have explicitly examined legacy. For example, [Leopkey and Parent \(2009\)](#) focused on risk management for organising committees of major sport events, and described legacy delivery as a risk consideration. Whereas this conceptualisation of legacy is distinct from other conceptualisations of legacy in the extant literature, we have included the article based on its potential to provide valuable and broader insights into sport event legacy concepts and contexts.

Second, the criteria we set in terms of academic peer-reviewed journal articles mean we have excluded some influential research and conceptual works published in books, book chapters, and research theses. For instance, key articles from *The Legacy of the Olympic Games 1984–2000: International Symposium, Lausanne* ([de Moragas et al., 2002](#)), and chapters from the *Routledge Handbook of Sport and Legacy* ([Holt & Ruta, 2015](#)), are not included in our final sample.

Last, the requirement for articles to be in the English language means the sample of articles considered for this study provides limited insights into the sport event legacy phenomenon from cultures and contexts where English is not the primary language used for communicating research. These limitations are largely due to the scope and framework agreed upon for this project, and may present fruitful opportunities for future research exploration. While acknowledging these limitations, we present the key findings of the systematic quantitative literature review in the following section.

4. Results

As noted, a final sample of 305 peer-reviewed research articles on sport event legacy published between 2000 and 2016 were included in the systematic quantitative literature review. Analysis of the reviewed articles is reported in this section in terms of: (a) bibliographic details; (b) types of legacy and focus of studies; (c) theoretical frameworks; (d) research designs, and (e) key findings. We address our final research objective (i.e. what are the gaps in the research, in the subsequent discussion).

4.1. Bibliographic details

4.1.1. Lead researchers and location of universities

In all, we identified 228 unique lead authors across the 305 articles. We identified 11 authors who have taken the lead authorship on four or more articles in our sample. Organised by number of articles and then by alphabetical order, these authors were: Laura Misener ($n = 5$); Andrew Smith ($n = 5$); Tembi Maloney Tichaawa ($n = 5$); Urmilla Bob ($n = 4$); Scarlett Cornelissen ($n = 4$); Tracey Dickson ($n = 4$); Vassil Girginov ($n = 4$); Brendon Knott ($n = 4$); Becca Leopkey ($n = 4$); Holger Preuss ($n = 4$); and Kamilla Swart ($n = 4$).

Authors' affiliated university/institutions covered 34 countries. The countries with the highest research outputs based on the home location of lead researchers, included: the United Kingdom ($n = 121$); South Africa ($n = 36$); United States of America ($n = 29$); Canada ($n = 28$); Australia ($n = 25$); and Brazil ($n = 8$). These findings demonstrated a clear geographic bias with the United Kingdom accounting for almost 40 per cent of the literature sample. The UK, South Africa, USA, Canada, and Australia account for almost 80 per cent of the sample articles.

4.1.2. Year of publication

As shown in [Fig. 2](#), the sample indicated a clear growth trend in publications from 2007 through to 2016. Two peaks are identifiable, 2012 and 2015. Analysis of these particular years found special editions of journals as likely influencers for the identified peaks. In 2012, the *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* included a special edition focused on South Africa's 2010 World Cup, and the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* issued a special edition entitled 'Olympic and Paralympic Policy'. In 2015, *Annals of Leisure Research and Leisure Studies* published special editions entitled, respectively, "Sporting and Cultural Events: Contested Legacies" and "Leveraging Mega Events."

4.1.3. Journal outlets

In all, we identified 136 individual journals across the sample. The most prominent journal outlets, with 10 or more relevant articles represented in our sample, included: (a) *The International Journal of the History of Sport* (est. 1984, $n = 23$); (b) *Leisure Studies* (est. 1982, $n = 18$); (c) *Journal of Sport & Tourism* (est. 1993, $n = 14$); (d) *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* (est. 2009, $n = 13$); (e) *Sport in Society* (est. 1998, $n = 11$); (f) *European Sport Management Quarterly* (est. 2001, $n = 10$); and (g) *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* (est. 2009, $n = 10$). Interestingly, all of these journals are published by Taylor & Francis.

4.1.4. Article title

We explored titles for the 305 articles for the most frequently used words to identify key concepts represented in the literature sample. The list of titles were loaded into NVivo 11 and using NVivo's Word Frequency option a frequency word count was conducted with stemmed words grouped together to identify the top 20 most frequently cited words. Given the parameters

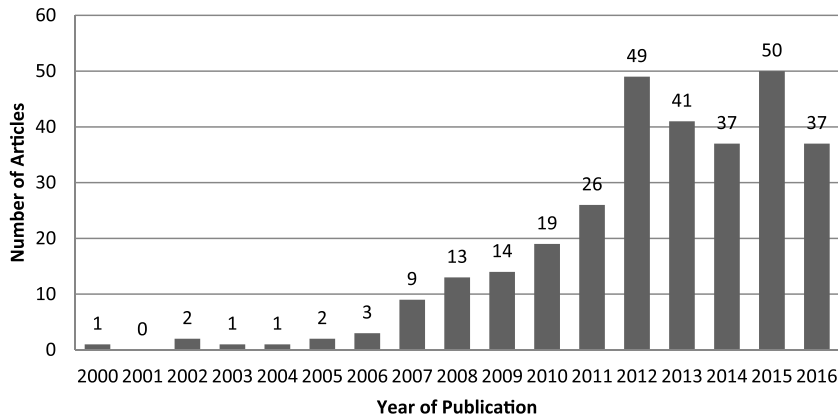


Fig. 2. Year of publication by number of articles.

for inclusion of papers was the requirement for the words ‘sport,’ ‘event,’ and ‘legacy’ to be present in the title, abstract, or keywords, frequency counts for these words were far greater than those of other key words. We excluded these words from the final list presented in Table 3 for a more meaningful representation of the other key words present in the article titles.

‘Olympic’ was by far the most cited word within the article titles, counted 158 times across 305 article titles (i.e., equivalent to ‘Olympic’ being cited in every second article), ‘2012’ was counted 59 times and ‘London’ was counted 56 times. These findings provide an indication of the centrality of the London 2012 Olympic Games to the current understanding of sport event legacy. In addition, high frequency word counts indicate that the South Africa 2010 FIFA World Cup is also an important influence in current understandings of legacy.

4.2. Types of legacy and focus of studies

4.2.1. Types of legacy

We categorised articles according to Veal et al.’s (2012) legacy typology, which was expanded to include a specific category for ‘environment’ based on the coverage of the articles, resulting in 11 types of legacy that the articles investigated. A total of 264 articles were categorised according to the type of legacy investigated. Among these 264 articles, some could potentially be coded to more than one type of legacy, indicated by the frequency rates in Table 4. While a small proportion of articles (n = 37) dealt with two or more types of legacy in a given article, the majority of articles (n = 227) of dealt with an individual legacy type.

A further 41 articles did not focus on a particular type of legacy, but rather dealt with legacy at a generalised level; for example, considering sport event legacy in terms of concept definition, planning and managing legacy, or evaluation of legacy. We address these themes in the ‘focus of investigation’ category, presented under the following section 4.2.2.

Table 3

Top 20 most frequent words in article titles.

Ranking	Word	Frequency	Word derivations included
1	Olympic	158	Olympic, Olympics, Olympism
2	games	91	games, games', games'
3	2012	59	2012
4	London	56	London
5	mega	53	mega
6	world	52	world, world's
7	2010	48	2010
8	cup	47	cup
9	FIFA	34	FIFA
10	host	29	host, hosted, hosting
11	case	27	case
12	development	27	develop, developing, development
13	impacts	26	impact, impacts
14	sustainable	25	sustain, sustainability, sustainable, sustained, sustaining
15	tourism	23	tourism
16	South	21	south
17	city	20	cities, city
18	planning	20	plan, planning, plans
19	Africa	19	Africa
20	participation	19	participation

Table 4
Types of legacy.

Legacy Types	Number of articles
Public life, politics and culture: Matters of public life (e.g. community interactions), politics (e.g. domestic/international political outcomes) and culture (e.g. arts and cultural interactions) facilitated by event hosting.	99
Sport – mass participation: Mass participation legacies, including participation in grassroots level of organised sport and/or physical activity, and the structural developments required to cater for and/or encourage increased participation.	65
Economy: The economic impacts of events, and activities related to securing economic impacts/legacies.	60
Legacy at a generalised level: Legacy dealt with broadly without focusing on a particular type – articles considered definitions, planning and managing legacy, or evaluation of legacy.	41
Built environment – non-sporting: The urban development, regeneration, redevelopment of host cities (including event structures, athlete villages and transport developments).	39
Environment (emergent 'type'): The environmental legacies of events, including sustainable design and event management principles.	28
Sport – physical infrastructure: Specific sport stadia/ infrastructure developments.	25
Health: The health of host city and nation populations.	16
Sport – information and education: The generation and management of information and knowledge, relevant to the sport event context.	12
Sport – elite performance: The developments/legacies as they relate to the development of, and participation in, elite sport.	9
Sport – symbols, memory, history: Symbolic aspects (creation, re-creation) of large-scale sport events, public memory and meaning of events, and the construction of heritage surrounding an event.	8
Sport – financial/administrative support: Financial and administrative support developments for sport.	0

The category 'Public life, politics and culture' contained the most articles, with almost a third of the sample covering some element of these more 'intangible' types of legacies. The category 'Sport – mass participation' and 'Economy' were both evident in approximately one-fifth of the articles. Later in Section 4.2.3, specifically Table 9, we look further into the focus of the research carried out in terms of these most prevalent types of legacies.

Legacy types which had less coverage in the sample included: 'Sport – elite performance' and 'Sport – symbols, memory, history.' The final category of 'Sport – financial/administrative support' had no coverage across the sample for this review.

4.2.2. Focus of legacy investigation

In developing the systematic quantitative literature review, the need to consider different foci of the legacy literature became apparent in terms of different ways in which the legacy types had been studied (e.g., were articles focussed on conceptualising sport event legacies, ways to plan for and manage legacies, or legacy evaluation). As there was not an established typology for foci of legacy investigation, the categories were identified inductively, with the final nine categories arrived at by the research team after coding all articles (see Table 5).

The category 'Legacy outcomes' had the most articles, with 40 per cent of articles included in the sample offering some type of assessment of the consequences (i.e. impacts and/or legacies) of event hosting. The second category, 'Legacy delivery' was the next most frequent with just under 30 per cent of articles considering the legacy planning and processes implemented to secure legacies. The category that had the least frequent coverage was 'Legacy perceptions,' which related to articles considering perceptions by host and non-host residents of the consequences of event hosting.

4.2.3. Matrix summary of legacy types and focus of investigation categories

The NVivo matrix query function enabled us to view our categorisation of articles according to 'Legacy types' and 'Focus of investigation' and to identify patterns in terms of which legacy types and foci of investigation have seen the most scholarship development, as well as identify those areas where there has been less development. The resultant matrix is presented in Table 6, with 'Legacy types' as row data and 'Focus of legacy investigation' as column data. To assist in the identification of patterns in the research, we applied a key to the matrix results to distinguish between areas where no research has been carried out (i.e., 0 articles), areas of low development (i.e., 1–15 articles), medium development (i.e. 16–30 articles), and high development (i.e., greater than 30 articles).

Consistent with the individual findings, 'Legacy outcomes' research into 'Public life, politics and culture' and 'Sport – mass participation' achieved a rating of high. However, the matrix also highlighted many undeveloped areas perhaps worthy of future consideration, which we discuss later in this article.

4.3. Theoretical frameworks

There was a limited engagement with established theoretical frameworks across our literature sample, with over 70 per cent ($n = 226$) of the articles relying solely on reviews of previous event legacy literature to inform and frame their articles. Across those articles which did incorporate established theoretical frameworks, there were 45 different theoretical frameworks cited across the articles. The theoretical frameworks which were applied in four or more articles included: social exchange theory ($n = 13$); process/change theories ($n = 9$); stakeholder theory ($n = 9$); event leverage ($n = 6$); critical urban theory ($n = 5$); and governmentality ($n = 4$). To date, over half of the theories cited have been applied only once in our sample

Table 5
Focus of legacy investigation.

Focus of Investigation	Number of articles
Legacy outcomes: Empirical findings or secondary data exploring consequences of event bids, hosting and/or legacy initiatives implemented around the staging of an event.	124
Legacy delivery: Practical strategies/tactics implemented to secure legacy, interactions between delivery stakeholders, risks and process and outcomes links.	83
Governance, guidelines and policy –Host city agenda setting, political ideologies, actors and governance mechanisms, interactions between events and existing policy frameworks.	54
Conceptualisation of legacy: Defining legacy and the nature and characteristics of legacy, the evolution of legacy and possible theoretical frameworks and ways of understanding.	53
Legacy projections: Opportunities to secure legacies, articles taking an ex-ante conceptual focus, or conducting assessment of progress towards legacy goals.	39
Frameworks for legacy planning: Models, frameworks, principles and steps for stakeholders to plan and implement to maximise legacies.	34
Politics: Contest between, and power play by, stakeholders in making decisions in relation to legacy (including setting objectives, planning, implementation and evaluation).	32
Frameworks for legacy evaluation: Models or frameworks to evaluate legacies, challenges presented by the complexity of legacy, issues of attribution and accounting for cost/benefit.	29
Legacy perceptions: Perceptions (including host and non-host resident, politicians and media representation) of a variety of legacy types.	18

Table 6
Legacy types and Focus of legacy investigation matrix.

Legacy type	Focus of investigation								
	Legacy outcomes	Legacy delivery	Governance, guidelines and policy	Concept-ualisation of legacy	Legacy projections	Frameworks for legacy planning	Politics	Frameworks for legacy evaluation	Legacy perceptions
Public life, politics and culture	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Sport – mass participation	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Economy	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	None	Low	Medium
General level	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	None
Built environment – non-sporting	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Environment	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Sport – physical infrastructure	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Health	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	None	Low	Low
Sport – information and education	Low	Low	None	Low	Low	Low	None	None	Low
Sport – elite performance	Low	Low	Low	None	None	None	None	None	Low
Sport – symbols, memory, history	Low	Low	None	Low	Low	None	Low	None	Low
Sport – financial administrative	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None

Key:

High	Medium	Low	None
More than 30 articles	16-30 articles	1-15 articles	No articles

of articles. Theories were most likely to be dealt with singularly, with only 12 articles in the sample incorporating two or more theories within the same article.

4.4. Research designs

Fig. 3 provides a visual summary of the findings for research designs used in extant sport event legacy research. Over half (54%) of the articles in the sample were empirical in nature. These articles predominantly used a qualitative research design, with 98 articles (32%) utilising one or a combination of qualitative methods which included: interviews, document analysis, observations, ethnographies, and discursive analysis of media. Mixed method designs were used in 36 articles (12%). There were relatively few articles ($n = 32$) that used quantitative research designs, such as scale-based surveys, secondary statistics, economic modelling, and quantitative reviews of media.

Just less than half (46%) of the articles were categorised as non-empirical. Non-empirical articles included conceptual and theoretical articles which sought to discuss the concept of legacy, and/or suggest theoretical frameworks through which to understand, plan and/or evaluate legacy ($n = 52$, 17%). Twenty-eight percent of articles presented case studies ($n = 87$), but did not detail the research design. While many of these case study articles may reflect qualitative research traditions, their lack of stated research design precluded these articles from being categorised in our study as 'Qualitative'.

4.5. Key findings

Given the size of the sample, the range of legacy types covered and breadth of focus for legacy investigations, a substantial number of key findings emerged from our review. These were inductively coded and grouped together to identify six main themes for key findings across the sample, listed and described in Table 7.

Regardless of whether articles had considered successful examples of realising legacy, or missed opportunities for realising legacy, a strong consensus came through in the key findings that planning is critical to maximising benefits from events and mitigating negative impacts. In addition, although article findings highlighted the complex and contested nature of legacies, there was still a tendency by authors to want to define or categorise legacy – as positive, mixed, or negative.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this systematic review was to examine the state of sport event legacy research in peer-reviewed articles published in English language journals between 2000 and 2016. Specifically, we sought to identify: (a) key authors, geography, and growth of research; (b) types of legacy being studied and the focus of these studies; (c) theoretical

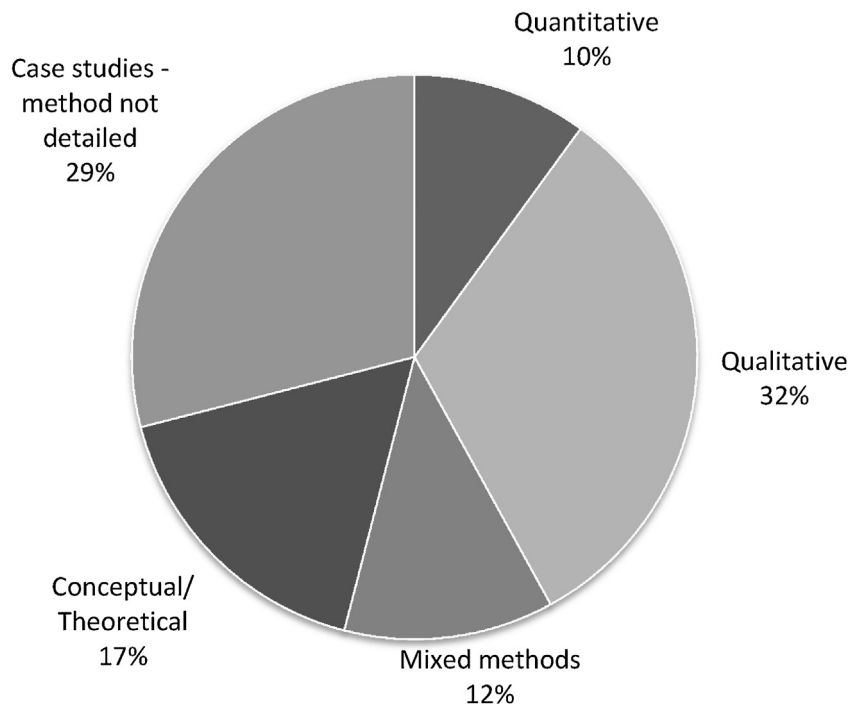


Fig. 3. Research design.

Table 7
Key finding themes.

Themes	Number of articles
Importance of legacy planning: The need for long-term plans integrated into host city development, engaging stakeholders to maximise benefits from events and mitigate against negative outcomes. Legacy outcomes complex and interdependent.	174
Legacies as positive, negative or mixed: Event outcomes discussed as positive or mixed, much less discussion of solely negative legacies, events present opportunities and challenges, unequal share of costs and benefits across communities.	136
Legacy as a contested concept: Inconsistency between legacy ideals and legacy practice. Event staging requirements inconsistent with long-term and sustainable development plans for cities.	64
Importance of legacy evaluation: Evaluation frameworks need to be holistic, transparent, and rigorous and providing balanced critiques across a number of outcomes and from a number of perspectives.	50
Contextual factors influence legacy outcomes: Local status of a host city (e.g. economic, social, political and geographical arrangements) influence potential to secure legacies. Local/global interplay between events, host cities, regions, nations.	36
Importance of intangible legacies: Intangible legacies identified as highly valued by host residents and contributing to outcomes such as city branding and place marketing. Much more discussion of 'intangible' compared to 'tangible' legacies.	19

frameworks informing the research; (d) types of research designs being used; (e) patterns in the findings; and (f) gaps in the research.

Our review demonstrated that the body of sport event legacy literature is at a relatively nascent stage. However, the research represented in our sample indicates some very clear patterns in the way we understand and investigate sport event legacy and conversely, highlights knowledge gaps which would benefit from further investigation. The trends and gaps observed in the research are discussed in this section in response to our research questions. We outline specific implications for academic scholarship and with the intention to assist in the development of an agenda for future sport event legacy research as well as consideration for policy and practice.

5.1. Authors, geography, and growth of research

Our sample of articles demonstrated a small core of lead authors within a wider sample of many one-off lead authored articles, a geographic concentration of research output, and a body of knowledge still in its infancy, with most growth occurring only in the last decade since 2007. These key findings indicate a pattern of somewhat opportunistic, or reactive, research whereby many researchers appear to be publishing one-off legacy articles, perhaps becoming interested in sport event legacy when an event is hosted in their local contexts.

This pattern of one-off authors in our sample of sport event legacy articles resonates with Weed's (2005) criticism of the broader field of sport management. Weed argued the sport management studies being produced in silos or on an ad hoc basis essentially represented 'lots of random bricks' which did not meaningfully contribute to a consolidated 'wall of knowledge,' or address genuine gaps in our understandings of a phenomenon. Other findings in our systematic quantitative literature review also support this criticism of the literature, such as the patterns we observed in our matrix of legacy types and focus of investigation (discussed under Section 5.2). Our matrix shows research has concentrated on only a few legacy types. Equivalent attention across the range of types is lacking, and we suggest this is currently inhibitive of a more holistic understanding of the sport event legacy phenomenon by the sport event legacy community.

Though we acknowledge the potential limitation of our English-language criteria, the mass of articles we reviewed suggest that Western English speaking countries have had the strongest influence on the development of sport event legacy scholarship. The geographic concentration of research outputs and the high frequency representation of the London 2012 Olympic Games and South Africa's FIFA 2010 World Cup, also indicate our understandings of sport-event legacy are largely influenced by these events, meaning our understandings are heavily rooted in investigations of a limited number of mega events which have been staged in two socio-political contexts. This finding resonates with warnings in the extant literature that the English language concept of legacy may be limited in its transferability to other socio-political contexts (Cashman, 2006; Pentifallo & VanWynsberghe, 2015; Thomson et al., 2013).

In addition, the articles in our sample suggest that the analysis carried out by the researchers sampled has been done so within a relatively short time frame around the actual events. Given that Gratton and Preuss (2008) suggest it may take 15–20 years to realise the true benefit of hosting a large-scale sport event, it is likely that academic understandings of sport event legacy may still be biased by the results of these studies. Based on this, it is perhaps unsurprising that the concept of legacy continues to be debated and contested (MacAloon, 2008; Rogerson, 2016).

Our findings suggest that moving forward the area of sport event legacy would benefit from sustained research efforts designed strategically to build on existing knowledge and address gaps in understanding, highlighted in our matrix of legacy type/foci (see specifically Table 6, discussed below under section 5.2). The sport event legacy research community has maintained a fairly narrow focus and developing research projects looking at a fuller range of large-scale sport events across a broader range of socio-political contexts would widen legacy understandings. Concomitantly, given the long-term temporal characteristic of legacy, the sport event research community could also continue to revisit established event sites

(e.g., London 2012 and FIFA 2010), to monitor the long-term effects of these events on their host communities, building knowledge to help inform future host cities in their pre-event legacy planning, and post-event maximisation strategies.

In terms of trends in journal publication, a key pattern we observed in our sample was the overwhelming tendency for articles to be published in sport or event-related journals. Notable by absence were mainstream journals in areas such as economic or social development, these are key areas which are often cited in the sport event legacy rhetoric. In addition, an absence of mainstream planning or policy journals is notable, particularly in relation to one of our key findings across the sample being the need for long-term and integrated planning (discussed under section 5.5). These patterns suggest that while 'legacy' is now widely accepted in academia, industry, and media (Brown & Getz, 2015; Sant & Mason, 2015) and there has been growth in the area of sport event legacy scholarship, there has been limited attention to the phenomenon beyond the sport and event disciplines.

These patterns in journal publication may not be surprising given Shilbury's (2011b) findings relating to the broader field of sport management, where the sport management literature has had limited impact on the mainstream management literature. Shilbury (2011b) suggested various reasons for this which may be relevant to our sport event legacy findings, such as sport management scholars choosing journal outlets according to their target audiences, or avoiding submissions to mainstream management journals with the anticipation that their work will not be accepted. Shilbury (2011b) and Doherty (2012) have also suggested that the multi-disciplinary nature of sport management scholarship is sometimes viewed by mainstream management journals as inadequate in achieving the kind of theory advancement desired by the top mainstream management journals.

We acknowledge that the multi-disciplinary nature of sport event legacy research may be a contributing factor to patterns in publication. However, we also highlight the inhibitive effects these publishing trends may have on the future development of the sport event legacy phenomenon. Again, in terms of the broader sport management literature, Shilbury (2011a) highlighted that mainstream journal articles rarely reference articles from sport management journals, and perhaps even more problematic is that articles in sport management journals are more likely to cite mainstream journals than articles published in the sport management discipline. Considered in the context of sport event legacy, what we might conclude from Shilbury's (2011a, 2011b) observations is that the development of our sport event legacy understandings is likely to be hindered by these patterns in publishing and dissemination of research findings in specialised outlets.

Moving forward, it is important for the sport event legacy community to consciously design and disseminate research to impact the mainstream areas of economics, social development, policy, and planning if scholars seek greater utilisation of large-scale sport events to achieve broader social and economic benefits. One way this might be achieved is through the development of interdisciplinary research, which would involve sport event legacy researchers working together with experts from more established disciplines on mutually defined problems, co-designing research projects, interpreting data from different perspectives, and integrating this knowledge to arrive at new and more meaningful understandings of our complex phenomenon (Doherty, 2012). Doherty (2012) recommended such approaches in relation to the broader context of sport management, when discussing similar challenges to those we have outlined here. Doherty (2012) acknowledged the challenges of such research endeavours, but also outlined that investment in such endeavours is more likely to broaden the body of research, increase the visibility and value of research, strengthen the field and start to develop credibility in other disciplines. Such efforts in the area of sport event legacy may contribute to alerting mainstream academics and policy officials that large-scale sport events are more than just two weeks of sport, and if strategically planned can provide opportunities for securing broader benefits before, during and after an event.

5.2. Types of legacies and focus of investigation

We focus our discussion here on the matrix displayed in Table 6, in which we were able to synthesise our categorisation of articles by 'Legacy Type' and 'Focus of Investigation' and identify patterns and gaps in our sample of literature. Our matrix reflects Weed's (2005) notion of a 'wall of knowledge,' where we have been able to identify 'bricks' of high coverage, but also a few gaps in the wall in terms of medium coverage, low coverage, and no coverage at all. We also note here that, given our 'Focus of Investigation' categories were developed inductively through a review of our literature sample, it is likely there are further gaps in the understanding of sport event legacy which are not yet known and may emerge through time and increased sophistication of our understanding (Horne, 2007). The legacy type matrix presented in this article will serve sport event legacy researchers as a resource to help inform the development of needs-based research agendas and justify areas for future research, across a range of large-scale sport events, in a range of socio-political contexts.

This systematic quantitative literature review uncovered a clear trend by sport event legacy researchers to investigate intangible legacies (e.g., 'Public life, politics and culture' and 'Sport – mass participation') with a focus on the legacy outcomes realised. This pattern of research is consistent with assertions made in the broader sport event legacy literature that there has been a shift in research focus from the short-term economic impacts of events towards an increased desire to understand the interactions of host communities with large-scale sport events (Girginov & Hills, 2008; Gratton & Preuss, 2008; Sant & Mason, 2015). The overwhelming focus of these articles on 'Legacy Outcomes' is unmatched by similar efforts in understanding policy, planning or other relevant influences on these outcomes. This pattern is consistent with criticism in the sport event literature that researchers have focused too much on the impacts and legacies of event hosting, without adequately developing an understanding of how to best maximise positive outcomes of events (Chalip, 2004, 2006b; Clarke

& Kearns, 2015; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Rogerson, 2016; Weed & Dowse, 2009). Given that practice is often guided by what theory and scholarship conveys about a phenomenon (Doherty, 2012), if sport event legacy researchers are going to claim more and better legacy planning is needed (discussed under Section 5.5), then there is a responsibility by this academic community to develop knowledge which provides practical insights and guidance as to how this planning might best be designed and implemented for different events and across different socio-political contexts.

In terms of gaps in the literature, there are many areas which had a low representation in our sample. For instance, while 'Economy' was the third most researched 'Legacy Type,' when we broke this down across the 'Focus of Investigation,' we found that there has been limited investigation of economic legacies beyond outcomes realised and residents' perceptions of economic impacts. This finding indicates that there is an opportunity for further research to investigate strategies to manage and maximise long-term economic outcomes of events. In addition, 'Sport infrastructure' is regularly mentioned by event bid proponents as a means to justify investment in event hosting. Yet, sport infrastructure has attracted limited academic interest, particularly in relation to examining how new sport developments can be integrated into community life (Alm, Solberg, Storm, & Jakobsen, 2016). Further, our findings demonstrated 'Sport – financial/administrative support' was not covered at all across our sample of articles. This omission is problematic given the regularly cited anticipation that the sport system will benefit through the flow-on effects of hosting large-scale sport events through such things as event-related knowledge transfer and increased capacities (e.g., increased sponsorship revenues, sophistication in event planning and delivery) (Frawley & Cush, 2011; Parent, 2008; Shilbury & Kellett, 2011). These findings present important practical implications for policy makers and practitioners, with our findings highlighting the importance of understanding the range and types of legacies available, to manage expectations about what is possible, and to deliver on bid promises by planning and implementing adequate strategies and resources.

In addition, we observed that while some articles looked at a combination of legacy types, most articles focused narrowly on a particular type of legacy from a particular focus of investigation. While we acknowledge the practicalities of the size and scope of a journal article, we need to balance this against Doherty's (2012) criticisms of narrowly focused research outputs. Doherty suggested that many journal papers are so tightly focused that they fail to adequately develop and explore the complex frameworks characteristic of real-world problems. Doherty also suggested that narrowly focused research outputs limit interest to broader audiences, which may also result in the limited permeation of sport management literature into broader mainstream disciplines.

These patterns regarding the legacy type/foci of the research represented in our sample highlight the need for sport event legacy researchers to balance the development of in-depth investigation into the gaps we have identified in our matrix (see Table 6) with the real-world complexity of planning for and realising sport event legacies. We reiterate the usefulness of interdisciplinary research approaches, discussed previously. There is also the potential to explore opportunities for transdisciplinary research approaches, an extension of interdisciplinary approaches, whereby researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds work alongside practitioners to appreciate the complexity of real-world phenomena (Toohey et al., 2017). Transdisciplinary approaches seek to develop knowledge that enables policy makers and practitioners, which in our setting, may focus on understanding the opportunities of large-scale sport events and the planning and resources required to realise these.

5.3. Theoretical frameworks

Our sample of sport event legacy articles demonstrated a limited engagement with established theoretical frameworks. There was a relatively small selection of theoretical frameworks in our sample (i.e., social exchange theory; process/change theories; stakeholder theory; event leverage; critical urban theory; and governmentality) that have started to gain conceptual development, and it was rare for theoretical frameworks to be dealt with more than one at a time. In the broader sport management context, the importance of sport management researchers engaging with, and contributing to, theory has been highlighted (Chalip, 2006b; Doherty, 2012). The purpose of theoretical frameworks is to not only help in describing a phenomenon, but also consider variables of interest within the bigger picture that can help to explain a phenomenon, to understand why something does, or does not, occur (Cunningham, 2013). Doherty (2013) suggests a good theory will enable the researcher to investigate aspects of what, how and why, as well as the contextual aspects which may influence the transferability of knowledge across contexts, such as the details of who, where and when.

The nature of the sport event legacy phenomenon, with various stakeholders and dynamics involved in delivering an event and securing legacies, and what this might mean for host communities, presents a number of opportunities for sport event legacy researchers to engage in the kind of interdisciplinary research pursuits we have already identified. While large-scale sport events as we know them are a relatively recent phenomenon, they have not occurred in a vacuum. There are a multitude of opportunities to engage with established theories across disciplines of political science, project management, sociology, to name a few. Such a multi-disciplinary nature means there are opportunities to draw on one or multiple theoretical frameworks depending on the problem at hand, and to borrow, adapt, extend, and/or generate new theory (see Doherty, 2013, for an extended discussion of these uses of theory).

Importantly, the complexity of the sport event legacy phenomenon should not preclude sport event researchers from seeking and testing theoretical frameworks, but instead be an important justification for drawing on existing theory, and conversely, using empirical research to make contributions to theory. This extent of engagement with theory is important to the continued development and strengthening of fields of research (Cunningham, 2013; Doherty, 2013; Toohey et al., 2017). Our findings

demonstrate there is a greater need for sport event legacy researchers to seek out and test theoretical frameworks, and to do so in the interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary approaches we have encouraged thus far in our discussion. Such theoretical endeavours will not only enrich the understandings of sport event legacy, but also address some of the challenges outlined above (see section 5.1) in terms of needing to increasing the perceived value of our research outputs, and in turn the visibility and impact of our research (Cunningham, 2013) beyond the narrow field of the sport event legacy community.

5.4. Research designs

Research designs, including research questions and the justification of select methods, should have a basis in theory (Cunningham, 2013). Cunningham (2013) describes theory as the “bedrock upon which good scholarship rests” (p. 2). However, as we previously outlined, the limited engagement with established theoretical observed across our sample of articles (see Section 5.3) suggests many articles included in our sample lack theoretical basis and rigour in relation to research designs.

The propensity for articles to use qualitative methods (almost a third of the sample) may be justifiable given the emergent nature of the sport event legacy phenomenon, with such research contexts justifying qualitative approaches for the purposes of exploratory research. Just over a quarter of the articles in the sample presented case studies of particular events without detailing their research design in terms of research questions, data collection, interpretation of data and/or any limitations or biases. This finding is particularly problematic given the broader sport management literature has called for the research community to contribute empirical research, rather than offering assertions or opinions (Weed & Dowse, 2009). The documenting and justification of research designs is also an important aspect in relation to developing our field of scholarship and building credibility in more established areas of scholarship.

Our findings demonstrate a need for the sport event legacy research community to ensure research contributions explicitly detail and reflect valid and transparent research designs. In addition, our findings resonate with calls by researchers for a move towards more holistic research frameworks and the adoption of mixed methods designs to investigate and evaluate legacy (Brown & Getz, 2015; Girginov & Hills, 2009; Mair & Whitford, 2013; Pentifallo & VanWynsberghe, 2015; Rogerson, 2016). Utilisation of transdisciplinary approaches that draw on established bodies of theory and emphasise meaningful engagement and co-creation of projects with practitioners in the field provide opportunities to deliver contributions to both theory and practice. Responsibility for such advancements does not lie solely with academics. There are also implications for policymakers and practitioners, who could play a role in co-creation initiatives, such as working with researchers to design projects and provide access to information and key events to collect data.

Sport event legacy researchers are encouraged to design empirical research projects with rigour and transparency, consisting of mixed methods, and as part of long-term research agendas. Pushing forward with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches will assist in developing the theoretical field of sport event legacy and provide a solid evidence-base to guide the decision-making and actions of policymakers and practitioners in relation to large-scale sport events. In addition, such research endeavours are likely to deliver practical outcomes in terms of promising practice frameworks for the planning, implementation and evaluation of sport event legacy, as well as to inform areas of scholarship, policy and practice beyond the current sport event-centric body of knowledge, which in turn may lead to improved legacy outcomes realised by host cities.

5.5. Key findings

The most consistent finding across the sample of articles reviewed was the need for host cities to integrate long-term plans for legacy within broader urban and community development planning with the help of key stakeholders. The sampled research overwhelmingly asserted that more needs to be done by host cities to plan for and secure legacy outcomes. These findings are indicative of a broader a paradigm shift away from the understanding of legacy as something left behind towards legacy as something that needs to be planned and actioned in the lead up to, during and after an event (Clarke, Kearns, & Cleland, 2016; Rogerson, 2016).

Our sample of articles also reflected a tendency to categorise legacies as positive, mixed or negative, with much lesser coverage of exclusively negative legacies. While there is recognition that specific legacy outcomes may simultaneously impact different stakeholder groups in different ways (Preuss, 2007; Thomson et al., 2013), there continues to be a trend in the research of attempting to categorise legacy purely as positive, mixed or negative. Further, there was much less coverage of potential negative legacy outcomes.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in the preparation of this study.

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Appendix A. List of article references included in final sample

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