

Original Research

Sport for development and peace: Surveying actors in the field**Meredith A. Whitley¹, Kelly Farrell¹, Eli A. Wolff², Sarah J. Hillyer³**¹ Adelphi University, USA² Brown University, USA³ University of Tennessee, USA*Corresponding author email: mwhitley@adelphi.edu***ABSTRACT**

Human resources are critical to the success of SDP as a field, and yet little is known about the experience and expertise of the growing number of SDP actors (e.g., practitioners, scholars, students). The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a questionnaire designed to enhance our understanding of the SDP field through the eyes (and experiences) of SDP actors. The current state of the field is assessed, from the definition of SDP to information about the field that is actively sought (e.g., measurement and evaluation, program design and curriculum, funding) to concerns about limited support, ineffective and inequitable practices, and unclear impact. By understanding actors' experiences in and expectations of the SDP field, we are able to identify a set of strengths and weaknesses that must be addressed in order to facilitate the field's growth and development. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations about ways the field can be improved, including enhanced access to resources and research, more quality collaborations and partnerships, and meaningful, rigorous research and evaluation.

BACKGROUND

The sport for development and peace (SDP) field has experienced rapid growth since the late 1990s (Coalter, 2010), with an increasing number of initiatives, events, organizations, and networks (e.g., Beyond Sport Awards, streetfootballworld, Up2Us Sports, Laureus Sport for Good Foundation). At this time, over 950 organizations are listed on the International Platform on Sport and Development

(compared with 176 organizations in July 2006; Levermore, 2008), with an estimated 10 new organizations created each month using sport to reach specific outcomes (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010). Growing political and institutional support has resulted in expanded opportunities for funding and the production of scholarship (e.g., Journal of Sport for Development, UK Economic and Social Research Council, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, U.S. Department of State Sports Diplomacy Division; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016), along with an increasing number of employment opportunities within SDP and related fields (Whitley, McGarry, Martinek, Mercier, & Quinlan, 2017). For example, since 2013, one SDP website has posted over 500 jobs in the field in the United States, and a global SDP website has posted 347 jobs around the world (sportanddev.org, 2017; Up2UsSports, 2017).

Despite this growth, previous critiques cite the loose, unorganized, and isolated nature of the SDP field (Kidd, 2008; Massey, Whitley, Blom, & Gerstein, 2015). Recent attempts in the academic literature have been made to address these concerns, seeking to synthesize the knowledge within the SDP field, including: (a) an integrative review of sport for development literature by Schulenkorf et al. (2016); (b) an integrative review of sport-based youth development literature by Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, and Smith (2017); (c) a systematic review of life skill development through sports programs serving socially vulnerable youth by Hermens, Super, Verkooijen, and Koelen (2017); (d) a systematic map of the evidence on sport for development's efficacy in Africa by Langer (2015); (e) a qualitative meta-study of positive youth development through sport by Holt

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et al. (2017); (f) a systematic map of the current state of sport for development research by Cronin (2011); (g) a literature review of positive youth development through sport by Coakley (2011); and (h) a scoping review of SDP interventions targeting Aboriginal youth in Canada by Gardam, Giles, and Hayhurst (2017). Additionally, Whitley and colleagues (Whitley et al., 2018; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019) have critically appraised both quantitative and qualitative evidence in academic and grey literature in the SDP field in six global cities (Cape Town, Hong Kong, London, Mumbai, Nairobi, and New Orleans) and throughout the United States. All of these efforts have provided a relatively comprehensive understanding of the current state of SDP as described in the literature, including but not limited to: (a) program design and implementation (e.g., resources/inputs, geographical contexts, sport activities, outputs, level of development, leadership, contextual assets), (b) research and program evaluation (e.g., research foci, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, methods, key research findings), and (c) publication trends (e.g., authorship, journals). However, minimal attention has been given to the experience and expertise of the growing number of SDP actors (e.g., practitioners, scholars, students). The few publications that have featured SDP actors have focused on their motivations for engaging in the field (e.g., volunteers, scholars, practitioners; Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Musser, 2016; Welty Peachey, Lyras, Cohen, Bruening, & Cunningham, 2014; Welty Peachey, Musser, Shin, & Cohen, 2018), partnership experiences within the field (Hayhurst, Wilson, & Frisby, 2011), perceptions of impact on the participants, community, and/or society (Schulenkorf, Sugden, & Burdsey, 2014; Spaaij, Magee, & Jeanes, 2013; Whitley, Hayden, & Gould, 2016), and impact on the actors themselves (e.g., volunteers, celebrity athletes; Darnell, 2010, 2012; Welty Peachey, Bruening, Lyras, Cohen, & Cunningham, 2015; Wilson, Van Luijk, & Boit, 2015). As yet, there has not been a systematic assessment of SDP actors' experiences in and perceptions of the SDP field. This is concerning, given that human resources are critical for success in the SDP field (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a questionnaire designed to enhance our understanding of the SDP field through the eyes (and experiences) of SDP actors. The intention is to use responses to assess the current state of the SDP field, as well as outline recommendations for ways in which the field can be improved. In order for the SDP field to continue growing and developing, we must ensure that actors currently engaged in SDP have the knowledge, support, and

resources required to be (and feel) efficacious. Understanding their experiences in and expectations of the SDP field will help us identify strengths and weaknesses that must be addressed, along with accruing a set of recommendations from those who are actively engaged in SDP.

METHODS

Participants

The criteria for inclusion in this study were being active in SDP and being at least 18 years of age. The demographic variables for the 140 participants in this study are outlined in Table 1. The majority of participants identified as working within SDP organizations, either at the organizational (31.42%) or programming level (20.71%), along with "other practitioners" in the SDP field (e.g., consultants, sport psychologists). The academics (15.71%) included professors, lecturers, and university department directors. Of the 140 total participants, 120 have engaged in higher education, with 62 participants (44.28%) earning degrees in a related field (e.g., sport psychology, sport management, physical education, kinesiology, peace studies, sport-based youth development, education). Alternatively, 58 participants (41.42%) have degrees in an unrelated field (e.g., political science, general psychology, international relations, law, business administration), with the majority of these individuals identifying as practitioners.

Questionnaire

A multidisciplinary team developed the questionnaire based on their experiences and expertise in the SDP field, along with foundational knowledge of the SDP literature. The questionnaire was then reviewed by six SDP experts with a variety of academic and practical experiences in different geographic locations, with a request for feedback on content validity. Their feedback was incorporated into the final questionnaire, which was composed of 33 open-ended questions organized within the following domains: (a) demographics (8 questions), (b) SDP field (7 questions), (c) professional development (8 questions), and (d) professional associations (10 questions).

Procedure

The study procedures were approved by the lead investigator's Institutional Review Board. Participation in the questionnaire was interpreted as informed consent, with participants only able to access the online questionnaire after reading an information page, including the voluntary

Table 1. Participant characteristics (N = 140)

Characteristic	N	%
Geographic Location		
Africa	19	13.57
Asia	19	13.57
Australia (Oceania)	8	5.71
Europe	23	16.42
North America	68	48.57
South America	3	2.14
Professional Title		
Organization Leader	44	31.42
Program Leader	29	20.71
Academic	22	15.71
Student	12	8.57
Other Practitioner	12	8.57
Researcher/Monitoring and Evaluator	10	7.14
Funding and/or Outreach Leader	5	3.57
Intern	4	2.85
Did not specify	2	1.42
Years Working in SDP field		
Less than 1 year	16	11.42
Between 1 and 5 years	52	37.14
Between 5 and 10 years	43	30.71
Over 10 years	29	20.71
Educational Background		
Secondary school or less	2	1.42
Some university	3	2.14
University degree	30	21.42
Some graduate school	8	6.43
Graduate degree	79	56.42
Did not specify	17	12.14

and anonymous nature of the study. Since an exhaustive list of all SDP actors is nonexistent, recruitment procedures were comprised of various methods to ensure wide distribution. This included, but was not limited to, announcements posted on listservs, newsletters, blogs, and social media. Additionally, the research team accessed their personal and professional network of SDP actors in-person and via email and telephone. Data were collected over seven months to increase the number and variety of respondents, with multiple communication attempts via the previously listed channels.

Data Analysis

Within the set of the responses for each question, content analysis was conducted in which two investigators

independently identified common themes in the data, grouping the data into lower and higher order themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At each stage (i.e., lower order themes, higher order themes), these two investigators engaged in critical discussions about ways the data should be categorized, ultimately coming to consensus regarding how to progress (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). A tertiary investigator also served as a peer debriefer to increase the analytical rigor. Additionally, the responses within each lower and higher order theme were carefully reviewed to determine whether patterns emerged in the responses based on the demographic variables collected: (a) geographic location, (b) professional title, (c) years working in the SDP field, and/or (d) educational background. In the section below, any patterns that did emerge within the themes discussed in the text are identified.

RESULTS AND SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

Defining SDP

The SDP field has been critiqued about a lack of clarity, which begins with the term itself. First, “development” and “peace” are vague, amorphous, complex terms (Sugden, 2010), with matters complicated by contestations about the name of the SDP “movement”: “What exactly is SDP? Moreover, one could ask what is Sport-Based Youth Development? How does this differ from SDP? What is simply Sport for Development? And why differentiate between Sport for Development and Sport for Development and Peace?” (Massey & Whitley, 2019, p. 175) All of these terms—and more (e.g., sport-in-development, development through sport, positive youth development through sport)—have been used to describe the SDP “movement,” with even greater diversity, complexity, and obfuscation in the definitions of these terms.

When participants were asked to define SDP, most provided complex, nuanced responses that addressed many facets of SDP that were subsequently categorized into themes. These themes are outlined in Table 2, although a subset of comprehensive responses is included here to provide a glimpse into the complexity of how SDP actors define SDP:

SDP complements existing strategies to reduce inequalities in health, poverty, gender, and disability. Working towards broader development goals, SDP provides fun, accessible and inclusive programming that strengthens communities and empowers individuals and communities. (P50, fundraising consultant)

Using the power of sport in combination with other interventions in developing countries to work towards social justice, health, education, human rights, rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, peace, etc., stressing that sport is often an easy way in but needs to be combined with other interventions and planned, conducted, and evaluated together with local organisations, institutions to be successful and sustainable. (P58, coordinator of sport and development)

Simply put, SDP is using sport (broadly defined to include any kind of physical activity/play-based activities) to achieve development objectives. Such social objectives can address a lot of different issues such as: improving health (WASH/sexual & reproductive health/etc.), empowering girls, promoting social integration, transforming conflict, improving employability, etc. (P111, intern)

Channelling the convening, and educational power of sport/physical activity as a vehicle to increase the salience of lessons in personal and social responsibility that can contribute to healthier, safer, and inclusive social systems for all. (P131, doctoral fellow)

Overall, the themes that were most prevalent in the data described the outcomes (e.g., life skill development) and impact (e.g., social development, social cohesion, social justice) sought through SDP. Themes such as social development (e.g., community development, country development/societal change) generated more responses from participants in North America, while social cohesion (e.g., human rights, access/inclusion, empowerment) and health promotion saw a higher percentage of participants from other countries. There did not seem to be greater responses from practitioners compared with scholars or students within specific themes, aside from the higher order theme of health promotion, in which all six participants identified as SDP practitioners. Overall, the focus on individual development in the responses is not surprising, as many SDP program outcomes target individual behavior change (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011), with recently published reviews of SDP research indicating a significant focus on individual outcomes, from cognitive and social life skills (Hermens et al., 2017) and general life skills (Langer, 2015) to positive youth development outcomes in personal, social, and physical domains (Holt, Deal, & Smyth, 2016). In fact, 49% of the articles in an integrative review of sport-based youth development literature included at least one youth development outcome (e.g., academic, social, confidence, positive identity; Jones et al., 2017). However, many of the participants’ definitions included connections between outcomes and more complex, macro-level impact, such as social cohesion (e.g., peacebuilding, social integration), social justice (e.g., human rights, access/inclusion, empowerment), and social development (e.g., community development, societal change). While this certainly matches the language that has been used to describe the SDP “movement” over time, there are critiques that this may simply be aspirational language that is faith-based, inaccurately generalizing micro-level effects (e.g., outcomes) to the macro (e.g., impact; Coalter, 2010; Langer, 2015; Massey et al., 2015). Given these concerns about aspirational language, complex responses, and diverse foci in the various definitions of SDP, it may behoove the field to consider the creation of a clear, comprehensive, nuanced definition that can be consistently used across the field. This would address P134’s (doctoral student and course instructor) concerns about having “so many different ways of describing work that seems to be very similar.”

Table 2. SDP definition

	Higher order theme	Lower order theme
Using sport, physical activity, and play for...	Social justice (19)	Access/inclusion (6)
		Human rights (5)
		Empowerment (4)
		Gender equity (2)
		Poverty reduction (2)
	Social cohesion (11)	Conflict resolution (3)
		Peacebuilding (3)
		Social integration (3)
		Violence prevention (2)
	Personal development (9)	Life skill development (3)
		Life transformation (3)
		Education (2)
	Social development (9)	Employment (1)
Community development (5)		
Country development/ societal change (4)		
Health promotion (6)	Health promotion and disease prevention (4)	
	Substance use prevention (2)	
Youth development (9)	Youth life skill development (5)	
	Youth development (4)	
Using sport, physical activity, and play in/as...	Educational/pedagogical tool (8)	Educational/pedagogical tool (8)
	Curriculum and programming (7)	Intentional/integrated programming (4)
		Hands-on learning activities (3)
Working group	Working group (1)	UN working group (1)

Note. The number in parentheses stands for the number of raw meaning units within the theme.

In addition to identifying the outcomes and impact sought through SDP, 15 participants also described SDP as a way in which sport, physical activity, and play were used intentionally through curriculum, programming, and educational and pedagogical tools. Similarly, Hamilton (1999) defined youth development in three ways: (a) a natural progression of learning, growing, and changing; (b) a philosophy of understanding youth; and (c) a method for working with youth. Thus, these 15 participants who included this focus on the method of engaging with others through sport connect with Hamilton's third description. Interestingly, six of the seven participants who focused on formal curriculum and programming had achieved a degree in higher education, which suggests this focus on methodology may skew toward those with experiences in higher education. In sum, participants' definitions of SDP were varied and complex, with much to say.

SDP Information

As the SDP field has grown and transformed over the last 20 years, there has been growing interest in accessing information, although the *type* of information most sought by SDP actors is not fully known. When study participants

were asked what information they sought most in SDP (see Table 3), there was a resounding focus on methods and methodologies (mostly by practitioners), from measurement and evaluation to program design and curriculum. Specifically, participants were interested in enhancing their knowledge and skills related to measurement and evaluation of SDP programs, along with access to effective tools, methods, and frameworks. P58 (coordinator of sport and development) called for "guidelines for monitoring and evaluation," while P102 (education director) asked about the "most effective and honest ways to monitor and evaluate impact." Given concerns about rigor and quality in SDP research and evaluation (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Langer, 2015; Massey & Whitley, 2019; Whitley et al., 2018, 2019), this interest in research and evaluation methods and methodologies is not surprising, even for those with higher education experience, given so few in the SDP field studied research and evaluation methods and methodologies broadly—or in SDP specifically. Additionally, interest in information related to program design and curriculum matches recent calls for more intentional and systematic use (and dissemination) of program theories (e.g., theories of change, logic models; Coalter, 2015; Jones et al., 2017; Lyras & Welty Peachey,

Table 3. Information sought in SDP field

Higher order theme	Lower order theme
Methods and methodologies (48)	Program design/curriculum (29) Measurement and evaluation (16) Trends and innovations (3)
Impact (37)	Current research (19) Outcomes and impact (16) Sustainability (2)
Opportunities for engagement (24)	Collaboration opportunities (7) Networking (6) Conferences (5) Key stakeholders (4) Methods for engagement (2)
Funding (15)	Funding (15)
Directions of the field (12)	History/definition of the field (9) Future of the field (3)
Career advancement (6)	Job opportunities (6)

Note. The number in parentheses stands for the number of raw meaning units within the theme.

2011; Whitley et al., 2018). Through program theories, conditions and mechanisms are identified that explain why certain outcomes and impacts are (not) reached (Coalter, 2013; Weiss, 1995), allowing SDP actors to intentionally (and effectively) promote specific outcomes and impacts. Without this knowledge, SDP programs are magical black boxes “whose contents and processes are taken for granted” (Coalter, 2007, p. 90). The participants (largely practitioners) in this study were interested in moving beyond this, seeking to understand process-based and evidence-informed program design and curriculum development (Coalter, 2010). Additionally, there exists a set of reviews that have synthesized the (albeit limited) knowledge within the SDP field, with findings identifying best practices as it relates to program design and implementation that should be accessible to SDP actors (Hermens et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). There is a need to make these reviews widely accessible to practitioners, given the implications for the continued growth and development of the SDP field.

Participants were also extremely interested in learning more about impact, from accessing current research in SDP (to comprehend the most impactful practices) to understanding the outcomes and impact in the SDP field. In the words of P66 (associate professor), I want to know “more about the actual programs being implemented and the impact they are having.” This is a barrier to the growth and development of the SDP field, with Darnell, Chawansky, Marchesseault, Holmes, and Hayhurst (2018) highlighting the “importance of access to and dissemination of SDP research for both academics and practitioners” (p. 143). This yearning (largely by practitioners) for greater access to current SDP research may reflect the fact that many academic publications are hidden behind paywalls, while program evaluations are rarely made public, thereby directly and

indirectly preventing most actors from accessing this information (Gardam et al., 2017). There is also a gap in local knowledge, with a need to better understand impact outside of traditional academic outlets. As Nicholls, Giles, and Sethna (2011) highlight, evidence about sport’s impact exists in local and indigenous communities, but this knowledge is rarely accessed or distributed. In P55’s (chief program officer) words, it would be helpful to have “up to date research being done within the field,” while P114 (regional program manager) stated: “I would like to know about the continuing research in the area.” Almost all of the 19 participants interested in accessing current research were practitioners from countries outside of North America, suggesting a practitioner-scholar divide that is particularly salient for non-North American practitioners.

When participants were asked how they currently access information about the field, a number of collaboratives, coalitions, and think tanks were mentioned (e.g., BeyondSport.org, SportandSocialChange.org, streetfootball world, Coaches Across Continents, Peace and Sport), along with individual SDP organizations, the United Nations (although the Office on Sport for Development and Peace is now closed), conferences, listservs, and newsletters. However, the most frequently cited methods were sportanddev.org (mostly by practitioners), academic articles and books (largely by scholars and students), colleagues and partners (predominantly by practitioners and scholars), and (broadly) the internet (largely by practitioners). When participants were asked whether these existing resources adequately provided them with the information they needed, 65.85% indicated “no” or “somewhat,” suggesting a need for improvement in this area.

As for recommendations of how this information could be more readily accessed, some of the same methods cited above were mentioned, including the creation of a broad,

informed network and both written (e.g., newsletters, listserv) and verbal (e.g., conferences, space for interaction) communication. Interestingly, only one participant mentioned enhanced access to academic publications, which is surprising, given the overwhelming interest by practitioners in information that is typically shared in academic outlets (e.g., current research, measurement and evaluation). Perhaps there is the feeling that academic publications will remain inaccessible, despite recent efforts made by journals such as the *Journal of Sport for Development* to unlock access to SDP scholarship for all actors in the SDP field. As outlined on the journal's website:

Open-access publishing means that readers do not need to pay to read articles. Most peer-reviewed Sport for Development research to date has been published by for-profit publishing companies who restrict access to universities and individuals with paid subscriptions. This approach disadvantages researchers in resource-limited settings and distances many implementers from academic research. Because the Journal of Sport for Development aims to serve as an open hub of evidence, information, and commentary, all JSFD issues and articles will be freely available online to the public.

However, JSFD should not be alone in breaking down these barriers, with a clear need for more open-access journals, more support for authors to be able to pay for their publications to be open-access, and more authors self-archiving their publications following publisher policy. Additionally, academic outlets should not be the only source for academic findings, with Schulenkorf et al. (2016) citing the need for the SDP community to close the practitioner-scholar gap by employing “accessible, innovative, and user-friendly ways of presenting research” (p. 35), from reports and newsletters to articles and blogs. Additionally, Nicholls et al. (2011) called for the identification and dissemination of local knowledge so that the field can learn from all actors actively engaged in SDP, regardless of their geography, profession, or expertise. This can occur informally through networking/connections, interactions/discussions, and other methods, although the creation of an authoritative platform (or perhaps the strengthening of an existing platform; e.g., sportanddev.org) could also help democratize knowledge and access. Many participants expanded on this idea:

A website or organization devoted to bringing together the practice (what programs are running, where, who and how many are they reaching, are they being evaluated, how) with the research (best practices, evaluations, problems). (P66, associate professor)

Yes, maybe a portal or webpage with better design, more interactive where there could be gathered all news, scientific research in the field and links to web pages of organisations from all over the world. (P117, network development intern)

If there could be a site (whether it be run by a professional organization or something else) that organized information (e.g., such as research articles within past year—and beyond—on certain topics, applied articles, presentations, organizations, funding opportunities, etc.), that would be amazingly helpful. (P140, assistant professor)

Ideally, this platform would unlock access to knowledge, resources, research, and training/education opportunities, addressing P89's (student and graduate assistant) suggestion for “a more effective way to get information out about the sector to those working in the sector. Not just researchers.” This could also address concerns about transparency in the field, with P33 (director of monitoring and evaluation) recommending more transparency with “sharing materials and curricula...it's difficult to find concrete toolkits. I do believe that these exist, but organisations are reluctant to share them publicly online, so knowledge isn't getting transferred across the sector.” Similarly, P91 (sales and marketing manager) suggested all actors should “be open and willing to share your information. I understand that intellectual property is a big deal and you want to be able to maintain control of your product, but we should be working together to achieve greater SDP internationally.” While transparency may be sought, Hayhurst and colleagues (2010) found that some SDP nongovernmental organizations perceived cooperation in sharing best practices or collaborating on toolkits as “potentially threatening to their existence,” particularly in an environment that fostered “competition for scarce resources” (p. 322). Thus, if there is interest in unlocking access to information across the SDP field, there may need to be a stronger rationale and comprehensive support for approaches that deconstruct silos through awareness, discourse, cooperation, and collaboration, such as systems thinking (Massey et al., 2015), collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011), and transnational/global impact (Darnell et al., 2018). For example, systems thinking helps organizations “move beyond linear, isolationist, individualistic planning, implementation, and evaluation” (Massey et al., 2015, p. 33) that often carries the assumption that sustainable change on the macro-level (i.e., impact) will ultimately occur through cumulative program-level outcomes. However, this rarely occurs unless programs intentionally align local efforts to societal action (Ricigliano, 2012). This can occur through systems thinking, which

Table 4 *SDP concerns*

Higher order theme	Lower order theme
Disjointed/disorganized field (28)	Isolation within/outside field (16) No set standards (4) Duplicated work (3) Need for an umbrella network (3) Limited resource sharing (2)
Unclear impact (27)	Lack of research and evidence-informed practice (12) Inadequate/undervalued evaluation (9) Overstated/unclear impact (6)
Ineffective/inequitable practices (24)	Inadequate/missing training for all in field (8) Sustainability (7) Neocolonialism and inequity for grassroots organizations (6) Lack of curriculum (3)
Limited support (23)	Inequitable/nonexistent support (14) Limited support from big organizations and governments (9)
Field obscurity/confusion (21)	Lack of awareness/clarity about field (17) Ineffective messaging (4)

Note. The number in parentheses stands for the number of raw meaning units within the theme.

encourages organizations to acknowledge the messy, complex, and dynamic social ecological systems in which SDP programs operate (Green, 2006) by seeking to understand, engage, cooperate, and collaborate with individuals (e.g., parents, peers, youth workers, teachers) and bodies (e.g., school, funders, government, corporations; Massey & Whitley, 2019). While this certainly requires a different approach to planning, implementation, and evaluation, along with more comprehensive support for these efforts, there is greater potential for macro-level, sustainable impact.

Overall, the information sought by the participants in this study, along with the ways in which it is (or could be) accessed, serve as a reminder of missed opportunities in the field. The majority of study participants (particularly those identifying as practitioners) were unsatisfied, with a sizeable gap between information and access. These recommendations are a starting point for unlocking access for all actors in the SDP field.

SDP Concerns

A number of concerns about the field of SDP were raised by study participants (see Table 4), with these concerns distributed across five themes: (a) field obscurity/confusion, (b) disjointed/disorganized field, (c) limited support, (d) ineffective/inequitable practices, and (e) unclear impact.

First, a number of participants identified general confusion about the SDP field, along with the field's obscurity in other domains (e.g., new field, undefined area, difficult to explain). For example, P91 (sales and marketing manager)

described how “the general public and also government don’t take it seriously,” matching Kidd’s (2008) claim that “SDP operates beyond the radar of most national governments’ domestic and foreign policies” (p. 371). Additionally, P85 (assistant professor) cited the confusion around terminology: “SDP is used interchangeably with other terms and I feel like this provides a challenge.” These concerns connect with the literature cited earlier about the confusion surrounding the name of the SDP “movement” (Langer, 2015; Sugden, 2010). Additionally, there were concerns related to the disorganization of the field, with specific frustrations with isolation both within and outside the field. This concern has appeared repeatedly in the SDP literature, with critiques of isolation in academia within SDP (e.g., within the disciplines of sport sociology, sport management, pedagogy, and sport psychology) and outside of SDP (e.g., within the fields of international development, peace studies, and youth development). Most study participants who voiced this concern about isolation were practitioners from around the world (e.g., Nigeria, Pakistan, Germany, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Ireland, Zambia, Canada, United States, Columbia, United Kingdom), with this quote providing a deeper look into these concerns:

I think there is need for more joint collaboration among all the sectors involved in the field of SDP. Most organization are working in isolation or have limitations in terms of joining networks [that] either charge fees or only accepts [sic] registered organizations. This limits the great work being done by grassroots organizations or academies who are doing great work in rural communities. (P62, chief executive officer)

This connects to the call for systems thinking (Massey et al., 2015), collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011), and transnational/global impact cited earlier (Darnell et al., 2018). Additionally, P58 (coordinator of sport and development) explained how SDP is “not always acknowledged that much in comparison with other interventions in the development sector,” suggesting a need for more effective messaging to other sectors and institutions (Black, 2010), with non-sport programming, with government, education, health, and other social services (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011), with high performance sport (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010), and with stakeholders in communities and policy (Massey et al., 2015). This enhances the likelihood of awareness, discourse, cooperation, and collaboration within and beyond SDP.

Other concerns came from participants working in organizations who felt frustrated with the limited amount of support received, ranging from perceived inequity to limited support from big organizations and governments. For example, P111 (intern) explained how “money and resources [are] not going directly to where it is needed; global strategies developed far from the grassroots affecting funding and project objectives globally.” This quote also highlights concerns that emerged related to inequitable practices (and attitudes), with another participant describing:

Imbalances between the global north and the global south...patronising attitude of the global north with respect to global south. ...These can be addressed by looking at local SDP from a variety of locations in the global south, developing capacity building at the local level, shifting the attention from Africa to other regions, training local universities in M&E and sharing important info in other languages different from English. (P116, consultant and researcher)

This reflects concerns by practitioners and academics about neocolonial approaches to SDP that subjugate or colonize practice and/or knowledge, with SDP programs frequently designed, funded, and/or evaluated in/by the Global North for implementation in the Global South, without meaningful engagement with local stakeholders (Coalter, 2013; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Nicholls et al., 2011).

Along with concerns about inequitable practices are concerns related to ineffective practices, with participants citing inadequate or missing training for all SDP actors (e.g., researchers, coaches, administrators). While the participants spoke of this concern in the field more broadly, it may also reflect their own education and training, with

41.42% of the participants with higher education degrees studying fields unrelated to SDP. This matches findings from Welty Peachey et al. (2016), with most practitioners stumbling into SDP from other vocations, without SDP-specific education or training. This is concerning, given the growing number of employment options in SDP, particularly for leadership positions (e.g., director, manager, coordinator; Whitley et al., 2017). While there are some training routes for those implementing SDP activities (e.g., coaches, teachers, community leaders), there is a significant gap in formal training and education for those interested in leadership positions, along with preparation for those currently in entry- and mid-level positions seeking to advance their careers (Lindsey et al., 2015; Whitley et al., 2017). Welty Peachey and colleagues (2016) connected this gap to a potential explanation for SDP organizational failure, with SDP-specific educational backgrounds and development, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills and experience a key to SDP sustainability. However, caution must be taken to avoid perpetuating the neocolonial and inequitable practices that participants cited, with SDP education and training designed for all SDP actors carefully considered and developed. “Institutions of higher education, NGOs, and other development agencies” must “advance critical and contemporary relevant education that moves beyond neocolonialism and neoliberalism and recognizes the value and acumen of local knowledge along with a willingness to adapt to one’s surrounding community” (Welty Peachey et al., 2016, p. 16).

Concerns about ineffective practices were not limited to the inadequacy of education and training for SDP actors, with this participant citing other concerns in this theme:

It's become a bit too general and programs are not always carefully or responsibly designed. A consensus on determining impact needs more work. Now SDP is a bit whatever you want it to be and often not well linked to community needs. It suffers, as does the development sector in general, with a supply side approach. In addition, suppliers don't always appreciate that sport is not a neutral good. It can be highly political and associated with marginalization. (P124, chief innovator)

This quote, and others in the data, raise awareness about the obscurity (i.e., the magical black box; Coalter, 2007) that exists when it comes to the most effective practices in SDP. There is a need to move beyond this (as discussed above), through both the intentional and systematic use (and dissemination) of program theories (e.g., theories of change, logic models; Coalter, 2015; Jones et al., 2017; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Whitley et al., 2018) and easy, equitable access to recent SDP reviews that report some of

Table 5. SDP recommendations

Higher order theme	Lower order theme
Resource/research access (31)	Knowledge-sharing (13) Funding (7) Best practices/standards/guidelines/ethics (5) Capacity building (2) Conference (2) Education/training (2) Collaboration/partnerships (17)
Collaboration/networking (23)	Networking (4) Space for interaction/discussion (2) Engagement with those outside sector (12)
Widespread awareness/engagement (18)	Greater awareness outside sector (4) Communication (1) Engagement with players/fans (1) Meaningful/rigorous research/evaluation (17)
Meaningful/rigorous research/evaluation (17)	Empower all engaged in SDP (5)
Organized field (14)	Global/regional leadership/alignment (4) Clear definition (3) Organization (2)
Equitable policy/engagement (11)	Governmental/intergovernmental involvement/policy (4) Localize/contextualize programming (3) Connection between grassroots and upper levels (2) Level Global North-South divide (2)

Note. The number in parentheses stands for the number of raw meaning units within the theme.

these practices. This connects to the final theme that emerged in this section (i.e., unclear impact), with the participants highlighting gaps in research and evidence-informed practice. Most of these participants were currently working in academia or in the area of monitoring and evaluation in the field, with P29 (chief executive strategist) stating, “there isn’t enough research for [SDP] to be taken as seriously as other development initiatives.” This matches findings in the field, where SDP is considered “out of step with the current drive towards evidence-informed development,” with a “need for reliable research and evaluation data to inform the design of policies and programmes” (Langer, 2015, p. 69). Currently, there is a limited evidence base in SDP that is largely reliant on isolated impact evaluations, with questions about rigor, concerns about what constitutes sufficient evidence, and few structured evaluation tools and manuals (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Langer, 2015; Massey & Whitley, 2019; Whitley et al., 2018, 2019). There is a need for more rigorous, systematic research and evaluation efforts and tools that are openly shared with all actors in SDP.

In sum, the findings related to concerns with SDP as a field correlate with the academic literature that cites concerns related to the loose, unorganized, and isolated nature of the SDP field (Massey et al., 2015), with Kidd (2008) referring to the SDP “movement” as “woefully underfunded, completely unregulated, poorly planned and coordinated and largely isolated from mainstream development efforts”

(p. 376).

SDP Recommendations

When participants were asked what recommendations they have for the SDP field overall (see Table 5), there was a tremendous focus on accessing resources and research, from best practices to funding opportunities. Participants urged those in the field to:

Continue sharing stories, best practices, and how to effectively tell our stories as a sector. (P29, chief executive strategist)

Be more transparent with sharing materials and curricula. (P33, director of monitoring and evaluation)

[Open a] learning/sharing space for SDP actors to gather, learn from one another, dedicate time for strategies to improve work. Open said space to those wishing to learn in the field (grad students, entry-level workers). (P64, independent contractor)

This matches findings outlined earlier, in which participants identified the information they sought most in SDP and recommendations of how this information could be more readily accessed.

Additionally, study participants spoke of developing more

quality collaborations and partnerships, engaging with those both within and outside of the field. Again, matching recommendations for practitioners for close collaboration with development actors in other sectors and institutions (Black, 2010), with non-sport programming, with government, education, health, and other social services (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011), with high performance sport (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010), and with stakeholders in communities and policy (Massey et al., 2015). There are similar calls within academia, including Massey and Whitley (2019), pushing SDP scholars to collaborate across academic disciplines and training paradigms, along with collaboration and partnerships between researchers and practitioners, from research and learning partnerships between researchers and nongovernmental organizations (Collison & Marchesseault, 2018) to the co-construction of knowledge between researcher, practitioner, and participant (Darnell et al., 2018). On this topic of collaboration and partnerships, three study participants had this to say:

Let the stronger organization lend a helping hand to the weaker ones in training, equipment donations, volunteering, etc. (P22, chief operations officer)

More ways for researchers and practitioners to work together and funding to develop and sustain those partnerships. (P66, associate professor)

We need to be looking more at partnerships with stakeholders/orgs that are looking to achieve the same kinds of outcomes—for example if you are a SDP org working on health education, what other public, private, or nonprofits organizations are out there working on this as well, and how are you using the knowledge they have to make your program better? (P130, director of monitoring and evaluation)

This need for better collaboration and partnerships within and beyond SDP is grounded in the concerns cited earlier about the isolation of SDP for both academics and practitioners, reinforcing the call for systems thinking (Massey et al., 2015), collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011), and transnational/global impact (Darnell et al., 2018). While there are certainly guidelines that should be carefully considered when seeking, creating, and sustaining collaborations and partnerships (Keyte et al., 2018), and concerns have been raised about the potential detriments of collaboration and information sharing (e.g., competition for scarce resources; Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2014), there is too much to be gained from such strategic efforts to ignore ongoing calls for collaboration and partnerships. The benefits include enhanced structural

capacity within organizations (e.g., processes, practices, accumulated knowledge, support structures; Hall et al., 2003) and contextualized, holistic approaches to research.

Finally, there was a focus on meaningful, rigorous research and evaluation. In the words of one participant:

Given that SDP & SBYD [sport-based youth development] are relatively new terms, I believe that the next few years need to be extremely rooted in research and proving the model. We need to make sure that these outcomes are actually happening and begin to setup [sic] structures within sports that allow for the outcomes. Sometimes it feels to me that [SDP] moves forward without full proof of concept. I believe that sports matter, but want to make sure that we are giving data-driven answers as to how and where. (P52, program manager)

This is congruent with the academic dialogue within SDP (discussed earlier), with an identified need for more rigorous, systematic research and evaluation efforts that engage all SDP actors, value all forms of knowledge and expertise, and are accessible and applicable to all SDP actors.

Overall, participants from varied geographic locations identified recommendations for meaningful, rigorous research, collaboration and partnerships, and access to resources and research, suggesting these are salient recommendations for the SDP field.

SDP Professional Development

Similar to the ways in which they access information about SDP, study participants described accessing professional development from a variety of conferences, workshops, and events, along with university courses and professional associations, collaboratives, and coalitions (e.g., Up2Us Sports, TPSR Alliance, Association for Applied Sport Psychology). Additionally, participants spoke of informal professional development through conversations with colleagues and field visits to local organizations, in addition to accessing articles in academic journals and online news outlets.

When asked what was missing from current professional development opportunities, many recommendations aligned with the concerns cited above, such as greater accessibility to resources (e.g., research, curriculum funding) and an informed network (e.g., experts in the field), along with training and education that was targeted, with hands-on opportunities for learning and development. However, there

was interest in global expansion of professional development opportunities, along with greater grassroots involvement, as “grassroot organizations are not represented or their projects are not supported” (P62, chief executive officer). This connects with the previously cited concerns of neocolonialism and power imbalances within the field (Coalter, 2013; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Nicholls et al., 2011). Furthermore, participants wished for more consistency, with professional development opportunities “few and far between” (P49, senior director of baseball/softball). A final theme that emerged was interest in ongoing support and follow-up, whether in the form of “resources for follow-up activities back in the organization” (P11, program manager) or “sustained and ongoing mentoring/coaching” (P82, education programming director).

CONCLUSION

This paper represents another step forward in the growth and development of the SDP field by presenting the results of a questionnaire designed to enhance our understanding of the sector through the eyes and experiences of SDP actors. The findings reveal and confirm many of the same challenges recognized and debated since the inception of SDP as a field of study and practice. There remains an eager desire for an organized field and a united, clear definition of SDP, along with consistent language to describe the work and the intended outcomes. Additionally, SDP actors are interested in accessing a wide range of information about the field, with practitioners especially interested in information related to methods and methodologies (e.g., monitoring and evaluation, program and curriculum design) and meaningful, rigorous research. Finally, there remains interest in improved, accessible training and support for future practitioners, managers, and researchers in SDP, along with enhanced opportunities for meaningful collaboration and partnerships.

The participants in this study represented a subset of a larger population engaged in SDP, and so we acknowledge there is much more to learn from one another—particularly from those who were not meaningfully represented (if at all) in this questionnaire: (a) those implementing SDP activities (e.g., coaches, teachers, community leaders); (b) community stakeholders collaborating with SDP activities (e.g., community leaders, parents); and (c) those engaged in SDP activities (e.g., youth, persons with disabilities). Additionally, while we acknowledge that many of the findings in this paper will be familiar to those deeply engaged in SDP, we hope the field benefits from empirical

evidence that supports what so many of us experience on an individual level. We believe there is tremendous potential for this field, but this potential can only be fully realized when *all* of its actors have the knowledge, support, and resources to be (and feel) efficacious.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The final version of the survey is available upon request from the first author.

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