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Original Research

Formalizing sports-based interventions in cross-sectoral cooperation: Governing and infrastructuring practice, program, and preconditions

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ABSTRACT

Sports-based interventions are utilized today in many countries in cross-sectoral cooperation, for instance, as a means of social inclusion. However, not enough is known about the conditions of development or the formalization of operations. Accordingly, in this article, we focus on two instances of midnight football carried out in two suburban areas in Sweden in order to explore the mechanisms and conditions for interventions to achieve increased formalization and sustained operation. Through an analysis of interviews and network visualizations, we examine how collaborating agencies conceive of and describe their role in the assemblages of agencies surrounding and enabling the interventions. By looking closely at the forms of collaboration and communication in these networks, we find that the interventions have developed locally and not according to a central or strategic design. We identify three levels of design within the interventions, where communication, cooperation, and formalization can be governed: *practice*, *program,* and *preconditions*. Through a detailed analysis of these levels of intervention, we present crucial mechanisms for increased formalization and sustained operation and how these mechanisms differ between sites. In conclusion, on the basis of our analysis, we discuss refined approaches to understanding the temporality and interchangeability in the formation of cooperation and thus offer a refined conceptualization of the formalization of operations.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the processes of development of two interconnected sports-based interventions and their conditions of formalization. The analysis illustrates that interventions performed in cross-sectoral cooperation between a variety of actors are experienced as complex and difficult to manage. Moreover, the analysis suggests how designing, infrastructuring, and governing can be carried out on multiple levels for such complex interventions. Sports-based interventions are utilized in many countries today as ways of achieving various social-policy objectives (Houlihan et al., 2009), such as social inclusion (e.g. Agergaard, 2012; Haudenhuyse, 2017) or even peace (e.g. Svensson et al., 2016) or other forms of international aid (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Kay, 2012). They are often deployed in cross-sectoral collaborations between public, private, and civil society or community actors (e.g. Agergaard, 2012; Rosso & McGrath, 2017). Such situations and developments have also been noted in Sweden, where civil-society organizations, such as sports associations, have increasingly been implementers of social-policy initiatives (Norberg, 2011; Stenling, 2015). Consequently, in recent years, a variety of sports-based interventions have been set up in cooperation between sports associations and public (municipal) agencies, sponsored and supported financially and organizationally by market-based actors and charitable supporters (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018). This development directs attention toward the infrastructuring of the technologies of governing that is being promoted in these networks and cross-sectoral forms of cooperation. Looking at the concerns around the development and management of innovative sports-based interventions noted in the scientific literature about organizing sport for development interventions, questions of formalization, cooperation, and communication seem to be particularly prominent in contemporary challenges. However, little is known about the developmental processes through which cooperation

Keywords: design; innovation; social inclusion; youth; sustainability

becomes formalized between the variety of stakeholders, such as municipalities and sports associations, as well as other community actors. Therefore, we want to understand more about the conditions and mechanisms that are needed to facilitate and enable interventions in order to achieve increased formalization and sustainability in operations.

In this article, we report on an investigation into and analysis of two sports-based interventions, West City and East City midnight football (MF), enacted in two mid-sized cities (with populations ranging between 100,000 and 200,000) in Sweden. These interventions are part of the same overarching organization orchestrated by a national foundation that performs activities locally in up to 20 different municipalities in Sweden. All activities are based on different cross-sectoral forms of cooperation. The interventions are carried out by local sports clubs in collaboration with the foundation and funded by sponsors and municipal agencies. We explore the relations between representatives of the sports clubs (i.e., the local management) and the foundation, municipalities, and sponsors. The two interventions investigated are examples of developing activities that are currently established in two neighboring cities of similar size. These interventions constitute sites for examining the formation of the intervention structure that has been developed in these distinct local operations. We use them to examine and visualize how operations can be formalized and locally diffused, not through formal comparative analyses, but by analyzing both interventions separately in order to gain perspectives and diverse insights. This approach constitutes a theoretically framed exploratory analysis intended to discover the variety of elements of intervention development and management at the two sites. The interventions are examples of a rapidly growing form of practice of utilizing sport to achieve social objectives, as well as an example of the cross-sector cooperation that is developing in contemporary social policy. MF is a well-established concept and has gained widespread media attention for the presumed social benefits it provides. It has been nominated for and won several prizes and awards.

In this article, we spotlight the development processes—the conditions and mechanisms—facilitating and enabling the interventions. The aim of the article is to explore the crucial mechanisms, necessary conditions, and opportunities for interventions to achieve increased formalization and sustained operation. We also seek to better understand how they may be diffused. Hence, the following research questions guide the analysis: How are networks of collaboration (re-)assembled, and what role do these networks play in the development and increased formalization of interventions? How are collaboration, cooperation, and communication understood from the various multiagency perspectives of partnering agencies? What crucial mechanisms and conditions can be mapped out as necessary for the development and formalization of interventions?

Methodologically, we examine how the range of collaborating actors and agencies conceive of and describe their role in the networks surrounding and enabling the interventions. We focus on communication and cooperation between agencies, the conditions for formalization of the interventions, and possibilities for interventions to multiply. From this qualitative perspective, we direct attention to how the various actors interpret and articulate their roles and experiences in relation to how the interventions develop. It is via this interpretivist and constructionist epistemology that we view networks and descriptions of development and formalization. Considering this qualitative ambition to understand how the variety of actors conceive of and articulate the networks and how they facilitate dimensions of communication, development, and formalization of the interventions, the research questions can be approached systematically. The questions raised are underpinned by a variety of concepts that will be mapped out in the following sections.

By looking analytically at the forms of collaboration and communication in the networks surrounding the intervention management of West City and East City MF, we identify three levels of intervention design and infrastructuring of the interventions, whereby communication, cooperation, and formalization can be addressed and governed in order to enable sustained operation. We call these levels: *practice*, *program,* and *preconditions*. At each of these levels of organization, particular efforts can be made to develop the interventions. We examine these in detail, reflect on the variety of mechanisms and conditions of formalization identified, and discuss the general possibilities for governing and infrastructuring.

As will be described later, previous research and literature on sport for development interventions has focused on the forms of organization that are deployed in collaborations, as well as the conditions of formalization and sustainability. In this article, we contribute to this body of knowledge by examining in detail and visualizing how networks are (re-)assembled, experienced, and employed for intervention purposes. Such knowledge is significant and relevant to both the academic discourse on formalization and the sustainability of sports-based interventions (Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016). This discourse in general, as well as certain specific findings of the analysis presented here, provides

concrete guidance for practitioners in the field who are developing interventions in practice. Such knowledge is important and much needed, not least for the leverage of sports-based interventions to contribute to socially sustainable development (Svensson & Loat, 2019).

The governing and infrastructuring of social interventions

The theoretical approach and analytical lens that we have used directs attention to communication, cooperation, and the formalization of social interventions. We see this development as processes of infrastructuring (Star & Ruhleder, 1996) technologies of governing (Dean, 2010), with the aim of promoting social inclusion and social change. Here, governing refers to the conduct of conduct (Dean, 2010). Generally, this refers to the regulation of the actions and behavior of young people, along with the technologies employed for this purpose (Dean, 2010). More precisely, this directs our attention to the organizational infrastructuring within which such formation is conducted (Dean, 2010). One example of such technologies is innovative sports-based interventions targeting urban youth in the name of social inclusion.

We want to highlight two points about the concept of governing: a focus on *cross-sectoral governing* and *governing rationality.* First, nonstate actors have played a crucial role in governing through hybrid or collaborative networks (Villadsen, 2008), something that is understood from a variety of perspectives (Hodge & Greve, 2007), highlighting operational differences between distinct sectors and actors (Hefetz & Warner, 2012), not least in welfare provision. Villadsen (2008), though, has argued that, traditionally, institutional and governance perspectives have overemphasized sector divides and differences between actors in cooperating networks—an approach to which we pay attention, focusing rather on how welfare interventions are developed in cross-sectoral assemblages (Villadsen 2008). Second, collaborations between actors and agencies are formed in accordance with a certain rationality (Rose, 1999). Interventions often evolve ad hoc, not necessarily as a result of strategic policy design. This does not mean that programs are the result of random or irrational actions—they are imbued with a certain rationality of governing—but rather, that the designs are not necessarily controlled by a central strategic body (Rose, 1999). Accordingly, "governing" is used as both a description and a context to frame the analytical lens presented, which focuses on very concrete forms of developing innovative interventions.

There has been a surge of initiatives situated within the overlap between policy development, social innovation, and participatory design (McGann et al., 2018; Björgvinsson et al., 2010). In particular, in the literature on sport for development there have been explicit calls for research about design thinking with respect to the organization of sports-based interventions in order to facilitate innovation and sustainable management (Schulenkorf, 2017). Joachim et al. (2019) have outlined a set of indicators through which the design of an intervention can be assessed. Design in these settings refers to the knowledge-intensive practice of articulating alternative futures and engaging the actors and stakeholders who make those futures possible using experience-based and expressive methods and techniques. When utilized in the intersection between policy development and social innovation, innovations employ infrastructuring in a variety of ways (Manzini, 2015; Star & Ruhleder, 1996). In participatory social innovation, the term "infrastructuring" is used to describe the processes used to develop infrastructures, such as relations, forms of operation, technologies, etc., that go beyond a specific project to support continued development and sustained operations (Hillgren et al., 2011). Central to infrastructuring is an ongoing alignment, or calibration, within and between contexts (Star & Ruhleder, 1996). In this sense, infrastructuring is also an approach to understanding the governing interventions that promote social inclusion. Jégou and Manzini (2008) highlight the relational qualities and trust between actors as enablers, particularly in relation to the communication and collaborative aspects of assemblages. Infrastructuring also relies on an openness to emergence and thus is an organic approach to collaboration, structures of facilitation, and engagement (Björgvinsson et al., 2010). With respect to the infrastructuring and development of social innovations, processes of formalization are central (Herrera, 2016; Mirvis et al., 2016). Herrera (2016) refers to formalization as the organizational processes of forming policies, institutions, and organizations to conduct activities and make innovations sustainable.

On this basis, we acknowledge the contingency of sector divisions and shed light on how interventions may transcend such boundaries. We consider the importance of participatory design, network relations, and infrastructuring practices for establishing and formalizing governing interventions. We see the design of interventions—their development—as a matter of rationality, meaning that this development is not arbitrary, however, neither is it necessarily strategic or controlled.

Sport for development research

Sports-based interventions often involve civil society and private agencies in welfare provision (Coalter, 2017;

Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2019) and it has been suggested that such cross-sectoral forms of organization may contribute to increased sporting participation among young people in socioeconomically disadvantaged positions (Dobbels et al., 2016). However, certain criticisms have been raised concerning the generally poor development of program theory, which makes it difficult to assess how operations function or what can be expected from them (e.g., Coalter, 2010, 2013; Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2016). Research has focused on such cooperation with respect to how it is organized and the conditions for sustained operation. There are great variations in how cooperative relations are formed, and this is important to note in order to explore the development or implementation of interventions (Lindsey et al., 2019). For instance, the configurations of relationships could be more or less state-centered, complementary, or coproductive development (Lindsey et al., 2019), and the influence of external stakeholders can vary greatly (Svensson & Hambrick, 2019; Svensson et al., 2019).

Here, the variety of organizational capacities facilitating the development of intervention programs is repeatedly stressed, directing attention to the *formalization* of interventions, *cooperation* between the various agencies involved, and the *communication* of goals and objectives. Notably, many studies have approached the organizational forms of cooperation and collaboration in terms of network relations (Cousens et al., 2012; Dobbels et al., 2016; Hambrick et al., 2019; MacLean et al., 2011; Lusher et al., 2010; Meisel et al., 2014; Wäsche et al., 2017). Mainly, the questions in focus address the degree to which networks are loosely connected (MacLean et al., 2011), fragmented (Jones et al., 2017b) or structured and coordinated (Dobbels et al., 2016). Establishing and infrastructuring sustainable networks or network relations seems to be crucial for the development and management of interventions (Dobbels et al., 2016; Svensson & Seifried, 2017; Wäsche et al., 2017), or using existing channels for the provision of interventions (Burnett, 2009).

A range of challenges in the development of interventions has been noted in scientific discourse. Here, a lack of calibration of goals and objectives between collaborating actors is highlighted (MacIntosh et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2018. Importantly, interventions need to establish interorganizational communication between collaborating actors for the calibration of goals and objectives (Burnett, 2009; MacIntosh et al., 2016) and to establish common frames of reference (Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016), particularly when it comes to segregated communities (Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011). Understanding and articulating the connections between organizational goals and the activities carried out within the programs has been noted as a vital feature of strategic management and instrumental for more and more formalized organizations and sustained practices (Petkovic et al., 2016). In addition, the various stakeholders and engaged actors need to establish long-term plans of action in order to foresee future operations, manage varied circumstances, and continue interventions in new forms of operation (MacIntosh et al., 2016).

Management competencies, such as the administration of finances, planning development, and governing external relations (Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Svensson et al., 2018), setting up and maintaining support networks (Welty Peachey et al., 2018, innovation capacities (Svensson et al., 2019) and facilitative processes for decision making (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012) as well as strategic awareness of risks and opportunities (Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019) are very important. Notably, such competencies may be associated with especially capable individuals (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). Still, the conditions for developing, accessing, or mobilizing such competencies vary between different contexts, and are thus difficult to structure according to an all-encompassing or universal design (Burnett, 2009; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Here, the importance of the competencies needed to navigate the complex landscape of cross-sectoral and hybrid organization, as well as tensions between goals and expectations among leaders and managers becomes particularly evident (Svensson & Seifried, 2017).

Jones et al. (2017a), in particular, have highlighted the crucial importance of relationships and network capacity for establishing cross-sector cooperation, involving nonprofit organizations, private and market-based actors, and public agencies. Such capacities refer to the ability to establish and sustain networks with funding agencies, corporations, partners, and governmental bodies (Dobbels et al., 2016; Wäsche et al., 2017). Collaboration and integration within public-sector and social-policy agencies are key factors for enabling sustained operation and goal attainment (Lindsey & Banda, 2011. Welty Peachey et al. (2018) note that the strategies employed to promote sustainability include a focus on starting up small interventions that can be diversified and diffused. The highlighted conditions are underpinned by notions that actors from different sectors may complement each other with respect to knowledge, strategies, and social connections; however, programs and practices often fall short of such complementary potential (Jones et al., 2017a). Moreover, the design of interventions displays certain power relations that need to be acknowledged, not least in order to design operations on participants' own conditions (Straume & Steen-Johnsen,

2012).

All these features and elements of management refer principally to questions of formalization, cooperation, and communication, both within organizational networks and between the variety of agencies involved. For the purposes of analysis, it is these concerns of management that are scrutinized in relation to the particular context of the MF interventions outlined in this article. The themes noted in previous research into the field of sport for development and sports-based interventions in a broader sense have guided the explorations in this article, both in terms of elaborating on research questions and focusing attention, as well as what is made visible in the empirical scrutiny of perceived networks and articulated statements.

METHODS

Site context: Midnight football

Midnight football is a sports-based social intervention coordinated by a national corporate social responsibility (CSR)-funded foundation, which is a nonprofit, politically disengaged body working for the common good, utilizing sports practices to counter social exclusion. The interventions are performed and managed by local organizations. The foundation is supported by a wide network of financial sponsors and has 10 permanent employees working with several social programs. In public documents presented on the website of the foundation, the objectives of the intervention are described in terms of "promoting social inclusion . . . through sport to prevent social exclusion [and] to contribute to crime reduction" (Source omitted to protect confidentiality). Midnight football consists of organized, yet spontaneous, indoor, five-a-side football (soccer) games on Saturday nights, running from 8:00 p.m. to midnight, open primarily to young people aged between 12 and 25 years. The interventions reach out to local youth in residential areas that are characterized by socioeconomic marginalization and exclusion as well as ethnocultural segregation. In practice, this means that participants are almost exclusively boys and young men (cf. Ekholm et al., 2019) with a first- or second-generation migrant background (cf. Ekholm & Dahlstedt 2019).

Midnight football is orchestrated by the foundation's management with the aim that it will be deployed in specific areas by local managers and organizers. The two interventions selected for analysis here constitute examples of midnight football deployed in different places by different managers and employing different forms of cooperation. By examining these two interventions, we are able to explore patterns of how the interventions are developed, diffused, and formalized.

In West City, the intervention is conducted by a local sports club in collaboration with the foundation. Activities are funded primarily by sponsors and supported by municipal agencies through subsidies. In East City, the intervention is conducted by two local sports clubs. The activities are funded by the municipality and supported by sponsors.

Empirical material

We interviewed individuals who are part of the networks surrounding the two interventions. After mapping out how these networks were perceived by local management at the respective sites, we selected the specific respondents because they were seen as the most engaged, involved, or informed about the interventions. Semistructured interviews were conducted with a total of 25 individuals. This form of interview was chosen because it allows interviewees to narrate their own views and understandings of the topic, with few restrictions imposed by the interviewer. Interviews were conducted in person at the places where respondents work or are active in their role with respect to the intervention, primarily by Ekholm and on a few occasions by coworkers from the project group, during late 2017 and 2018. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim either by Ekholm or by a professional transcriber. Interview guides were structured around descriptions of (a) network relations, (b) the rationale and objectives of MF, (c) respondents' own role and function, and (d) forms of communication and cooperation. Consequently, the material contains descriptions of the interventions' organization, the activities being organized, and the forms of cooperation from the perspectives of the various cooperating agencies.

A card-based facilitation tool was used in the interviews to enable each informant to share their conceptualization and experience of the assemblage of people and actors, through a visual/material technique (Sutton, 2011; Banks, 2001; Čaić et al., 2019). The cards carry pictograms of people with space to write a name, a role, or an organization. The respondents were asked to name actors and relationships that make MF work, and these were then documented on the cards and in a network depicting the relationships among these actors. The resulting assemblages consist of images of the collaborating actors and agencies (e.g., the managers, the foundation, municipal agencies, and sponsors) as well as the agencies involved or approached through the intervention (e.g., coaches, youths, distant community actors, police, etc.). The assemblages are mapped out to illustrate the networks and relations as they are perceived by the specific respondent. In this sense, the

network assemblages are representations of one respondent's views on the current network in operation and how that respondent acts (Kirsh, 2010; Malafouris, 2013) to make MF possible. The facilitation tool augmented the interviews (Sutton, 2011) and complemented the explicit descriptions, giving opportunities to express both latent and tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967), working as documentation of what has been talked about, as well as providing something concrete to talk about.

Initially, during the process of analysis, we distinguished four kinds of actors and agencies that are instrumental in the management and operation of the interventions. These categories of actors were identified after an initial thematic analysis of the interviews. Notably, these categories were outlined in the respondents' statements.

Local management provides the local organization, performs the interventions, and manages the networks. At both sites, we interviewed the intervention management and sports coaches leading the activities. In the analysis presented below, we draw primarily on the networks described and interviews with the two senior managers at the respective sites (West City manager and East City manager). They are both men aged 30 to 35 and actively engaged in the sports movement and local associations.

The *foundation* provides a general concept of the intervention as well as providing support for the local management. Here, we interviewed the foundation's three central officials. In the analysis, we draw primarily on the networks described by the foundation's manager, a social entrepreneur actively engaged in the local intervention activities.

Municipal agencies provide subsidies and grants as well as general support in terms of facilities, etc. We interviewed both policymakers and civil servants who have insights into cooperation and are responsible for it in both municipal administrations. We illustrate the analysis primarily based on descriptions provided in West City by the chairperson of the Board of Culture and Leisure Affairs and in East City by the chief civil servant responsible for sports issues in the administration of cultural and leisure affairs.

Financial sponsors provide financial support but also support the management with organizational capacities and extended networks. Here, we interviewed a variety of actors. In order to present the analysis and key findings, we selected one local sponsor at each site, who is important for facilitating the interventions. For West City MF, we draw on the materials provided by one key sponsor, the factory owner, to highlight and illustrate the analysis of supportive sponsors, and for East City MF, we use materials from a local gym owner who supports the operations. The financial sponsors are not actively engaged in the sports activities at the respective sites, however, they are involved in financial and organizational support.

Analytical procedure

The analysis presented in this article is based on the totality of interviews and assembled network charts, however, in order to visualize and illustrate the forms of communication, relations formed, and cooperation experienced, we singled out certain individuals from the various actors and agencies in order to highlight the main findings and rationale. Representatives of actors and agencies chosen for visualizing the analysis were selected on the basis of their engagement in the operations. Indications of their engagement were assessed qualitatively on the basis of the interviews analyzed. Specifically, when it came to visualizations of actor networks, when there was more than one possible choice, we chose actors for whom a relationship was defined by local management and where this actor also defined a reciprocal relationship with local management. Moreover, this relationship had to be articulated as significant in relation to establishing the initiative. Specifically, for sponsors, we analyzed both a locally engaged sponsor with an interest in the city and a sponsor with a business interest in the initiative.

Network analysis is not new in sports research (e.g., Wäsche et al., 2017; Lusher et al., 2010). Previous research has focused on the network analysis of themes such as organization, management, and performance, mainly looking at sports clubs and formalized sports organizations. In general, in social network analysis, networks are construed as analytical aggregates of all input from all respondents, either in a sociocentric fashion, focusing on social structures, or an egocentric fashion, focusing on individual actors (Banks, 2001). Our focus is on individuals' conceptions of how the social intervention MF is made possible and the actors and relationships that each individual asserts to be part of that. Such a focus is in line with the studies that are called for in Wäsche et al. (2017) and specifically with respect to the interpretative and ethnographically inspired approaches stressed by Burnett (2015).

We have analyzed statements from the interviews and the network visualizations intertwined together, similarly to the qualitative analysis in Čaić et al. (2019). Initially, we analyzed network maps in pairs, acknowledging that each respondent views the other actors in the network in different ways and that each actor has a limited perspective on

Figure 1. West City midnight football network map between manager and municipality.

Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

whatever system they are part of. As they externalize this structure, they are communicating with themselves and articulating their mental model of the network that makes MF possible (Kirsh, 2010; Norman, 1988). Their conceptions will vary with respect to which actors are part of their network, which actors are connected to each other, and what roles each actor plays.

From a sociocentric point of view, taken together, the participants define the boundaries of the whole network. Our analysis begins with each individual's network and combines it with one other related actor's network, aggregating only those two actors' assemblages and thus creating duo-centric networks. Because we are only aggregating two respondents' perspectives in our analysis, we have not used standard network analytical concepts. The resulting network positions two actors at the center of the map and structures the other actors from those two maps into seven analytical categories around them. These categories were developed based on how the interviewees described the other actors during the interviews and how they were positioned in the original network maps.

Then, the descriptions of the networks as articulated in the interviews were examined. Based on the conceptual understandings of themes such as communication, cooperation, formalization, and diffusion, as well as the theoretical framework of governmental rationality and cross-sectoral assemblages, the interview material was analyzed. Here, conceptual themes derived from previous research were integrated into the analytical frames of interpretation after initial and inductive scrutiny and coding processes, while notions of governmental rationality and constructivist epistemology guided the outline of aims and research questions generally. The analyses of perceived networks and articulated descriptions were conveyed by the two researchers in joint and common sessions of exploration in a series of meetings over 12 months. No specific software was used for analysis or coding. The analysis was marked by exploratory ambitions and empirical detail and proximity, guided by the aims and research questions outlined above. By means of the detailed and accurate reporting of the methods deployed and interpretative strategies used in the analysis, together with illustrative excerpts and insights into the empirical material analyzed, the credibility of the analysis and findings can be supported (Tracy, 2010).

Findings

The presentation of the results and analysis are structured into two subsections, highlighting how the collaborating networks were formed and understood with respect to each local site of intervention. Thereafter, based on this analysis, the conditions of formalization and diffusion are discussed. Based on six visualizations, this section goes into analytical detail about how the networks of cooperating actors and agencies are being formed. Here, we take the perspectives and descriptions of the West City and East City MF managers as our point of departure and analyze how relations to the municipality, the foundation, and the sponsors and supporters are experienced and described.

Cooperation, communication, and formalization: The networks in West City

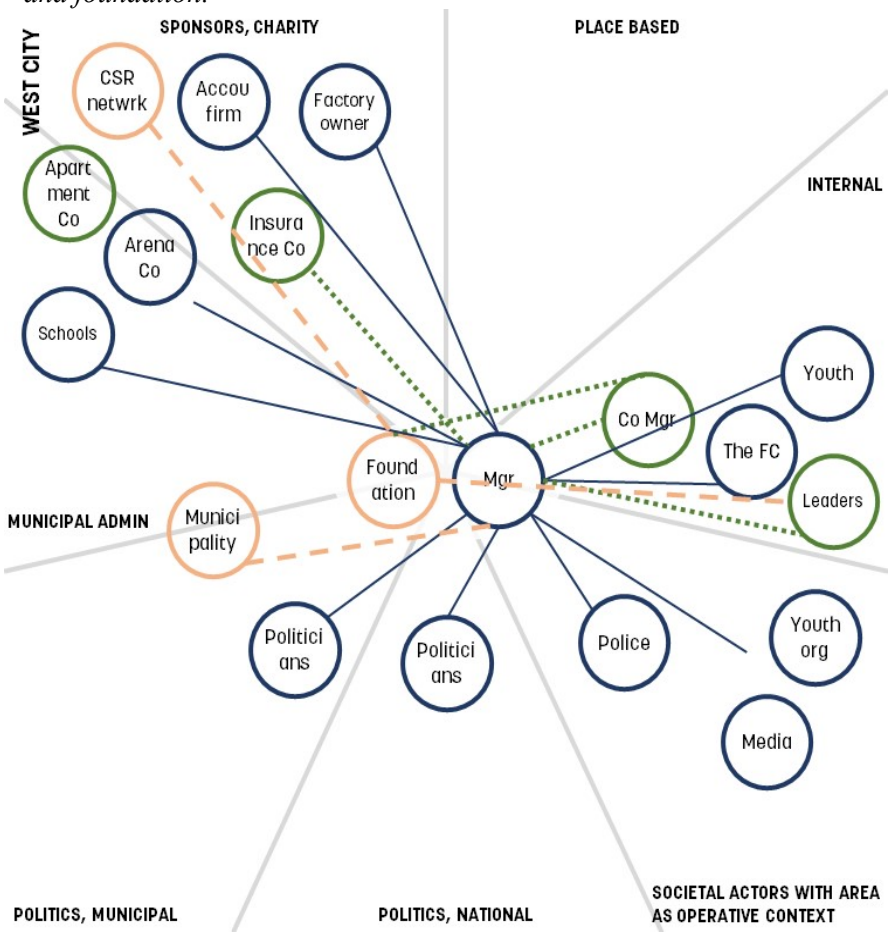
From the perspective of the manager, the municipality is viewed as an important actor for several reasons. The municipality, formally governed by social policy that stresses social-inclusion objectives, provides the gymnasium where the activities take place. The manager views the municipality as a potential financial contributor to the MF intervention. This manager believes that the municipality should make larger financial contributions given the benefits of the program for local social inclusion. When visualizing the actor network and talking about the municipal government and administration, the manager refers to them as one integrated unit, with little emphasis on potential differences between policymakers (locally elected representatives) and civil servants (in various administrations) (see Figure 1). Instead, he describes the relationships with municipal functions in terms of personal relations. Accordingly, the manager enjoys good relations with a few policymakers and civil servants in their capacities as individuals. Moreover, he also enjoys good social relations with national policymakers. These relationships are described as being used to put pressure on the policymakers and civil servants responsible for the municipality's part in the intervention:

We chased them a lot . . . the Mayor, for instance. . . . What's his name . . . [opposition councilor, right-wing party]. I talked to him. [Opposition councilor, liberal-center party], we had a great relationship. . . . We need to talk to the political opposition to make things happen with the political majority. And we need to talk with the political majority to make things happen. . . . A good dialogue with policymakers doesn't hurt . . . having a good relationship with them. We had [the Minister for Home Affairs, social-democratic party] here. Invited him . . . or he even invited himself to our midnight football. . . . And the Crown Princess and Prince even contributed . . . gave us some money and said they wanted to come. . . . But, like . . . everyone thinks it's a good thing. Until it comes down to making decisions. Then it becomes difficult. (West City MF manager)

From the perspective of the municipal agencies (the chair of the Board of Culture and Leisure and civil servants from associated administrations), four interrelated obstacles to developing successful cooperation are described. Initially, the intervention was organized through an economic association that requested funding based on the claimed social benefits. However, economic associations face legal restrictions on the kinds of support they can receive from the municipality, e.g., subsidies for renting the gymnasium are not available. Therefore, the intervention manager set up a new voluntary sports organization to make the intervention eligible for support. Here, operational differences based on the sector belonging attributed to the intervention's management impinged on the organization's opportunities. Support could not be granted on the basis of the claimed social benefits, since the Board of Culture and Leisure formally regarded the association as a sports provider rather than a provider of social support. Second, there was a lack of calibration of objectives between the intervention and the municipal representatives, who had different notions and made different assessments of inclusion. Third, municipal representatives promoted forms of cooperation with the municipal youth and culture centers that could provide leadership education and organizational support as well as insight and control (indirect links in Figure 1). Fourth, there are recurring descriptions of how the intervention manager engages in dialogue with a variety of policymakers (primarily high-level municipal councilors and national policymakers) to argue for financial support on the basis of the expected social benefits. This results in unproductive pressure being put on the local culture and leisure boards and the administration from external policymakers. Instead, communication should go through the municipal administration's civil servants, which would simplify communication and interaction and also the calibration of the intervention's objectives. This would then enable support, as illustrated by the chairperson of West City Board of Culture and Leisure:

The mayor got in touch and suggested that we should solve this problem for the midnight-football guys. . . . The usual way is to contact the administration handling grants. . . . So, they tried other ways . . . with the mayor and other policymakers. They only talked with politicians. And the problem when you talk to politicians is that nothing happens because policymakers can't hand out grants. Instead, you're referred to civil servants, who can solve this.

Figure 2. West City midnight football network map between manager and foundation.



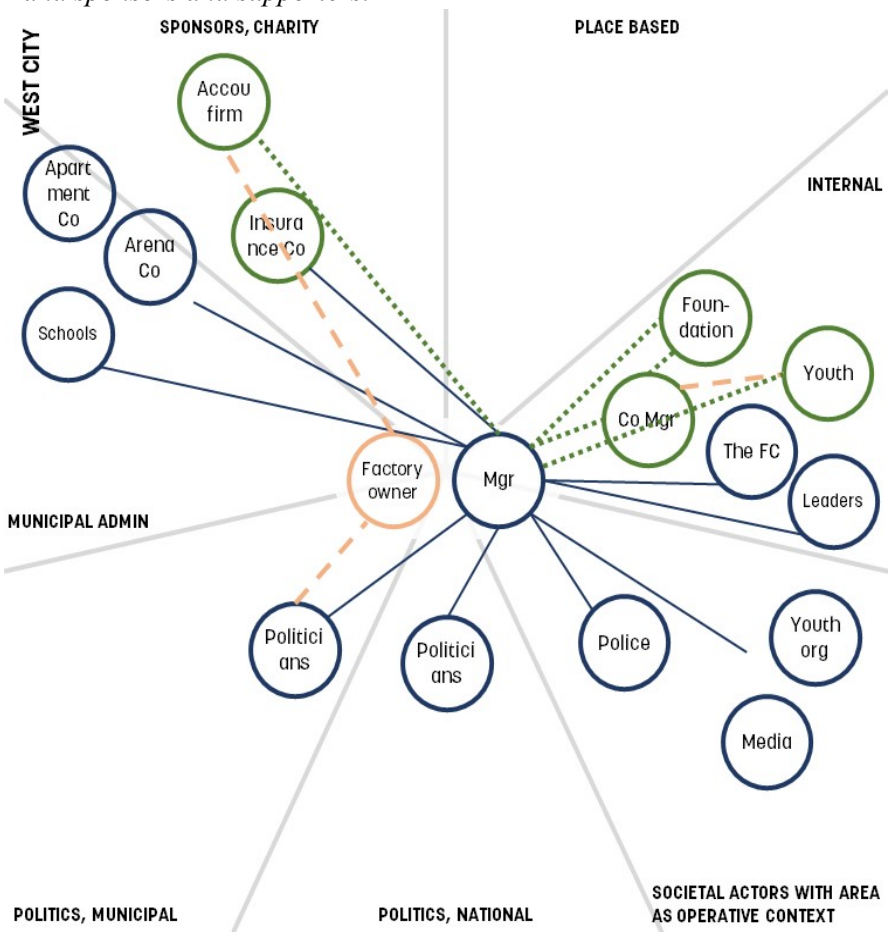
Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

In sum, the policymaker here explains that, from this perspective, the contacts for which the West City MF manager is striving do not constitute a strategic or successful approach, but are instead counterproductive for the ambitions promoted.

The manager believes that he shares a common perspective on the practices with the foundation's management and explains that the foundation has a detailed concept of the football activities provided. This concerns a predefined practice arrangement: five-a-side football on Saturday nights, coaches divide youths into teams, first to score wins, the winners remain on court, subsequent teams enter after circulation. This manager also described detailed pedagogical ideas about how coaches should act and behave as role models. The manager sees the foundation as a facilitator and enabler of practices. However, he describes a lack of organizational support for management, financial administration, strategies of funding and of establishing collaborations with external agencies and funders. He says, "that's our biggest problem" and that the management consists of "a sound association but not a solid organization to manage" the variety of administration necessary. There appears to be a lack of assistance with organization and administration.

The foundation's director views the foundation as a facilitator and the local intervention management as an implementer of practices, expressing confidence in their competence to carry out the intervention. The director states that he "brought the concept to Sweden from England and created MF" and that it is "a simple concept . . . opening doors to sports centers and fields . . . carried out in socioeconomically weak areas with problems, crime, gangs, and such." One of the foundation's representatives, a former elite footballer, states that he has good insight and well-established relations with the management and coaches leading the MF practices. He visited the sites and tutored the local coaches (see Figure 2). The foundation then focuses on the practices being performed and implemented. According to the foundation's representatives, they have occasionally, but not strategically, supported the intervention's management with contacts and discussions about formalized collaboration and financial support with municipality representatives.

Figure 3. West City midnight football network map between manager and sponsors and supporters.



Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

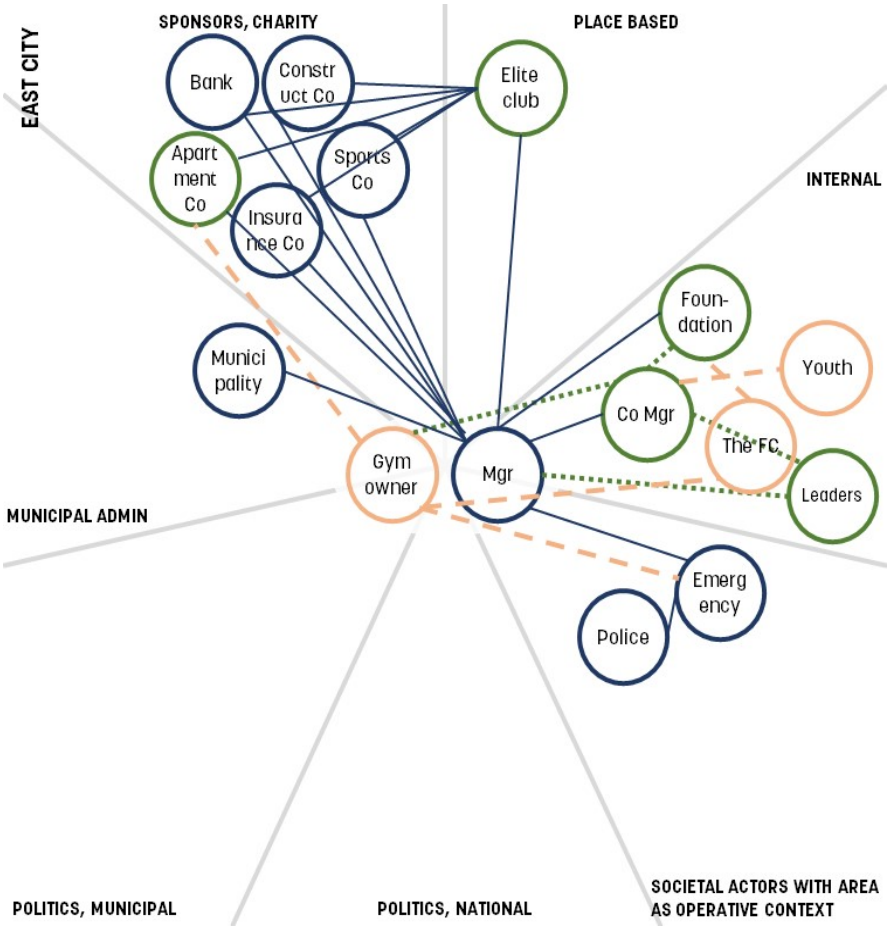
From the perspective of the manager, the financial supporters are charitable contributors (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018) making the intervention possible either with financial resources or by supplying sports equipment. There is one example of a sponsor in the manager's personal network (the accounting firm) introducing another important sponsor: a factory owner. According to the West City MF manager, the factory owner said, "I will give you SEK 20,000 . . . that I want you to spend on the most boring things you can't sell to any other sponsor." The variety of sponsors provides an extended social network. The factory owner has his own personal network of social relations, as illustrated in Figure 3, most notably involving a range of high-level and national policymakers. According to the manager, such contacts had been used in dialogue with policymakers on the municipal council.

The factory owner (used as an example of a sponsor) has very limited insight into the organization of the intervention or into the surrounding cooperative networks. He describes well-established relations with local policymakers with whom he has contacts regarding the conditions for the MF. Relations with municipal councilors are enforced as a result of this contribution. The factory owner stresses his reluctance to enter into dialogue with civil servants or, in his view, the overly bureaucratic municipal administration (see Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2018). He explains, "I keep away from the administration, it would only end in misery . . . but I like to talk about this project in all possible contexts . . . with the municipal councilors." Accordingly, the network and contacts of the sponsor reaffirm that contacts with municipal representatives target high-level councilors and national policymakers, rather than the Board of Culture and Leisure and the associated administration (see Figure 3). This notion is underpinned by an antistatist view of how civil society should ideally be integrated into welfare provision. In addition, other sponsors, including the sports gear brand and the insurance company representatives, described how they have taken part in communicating with policymakers and the culture and leisure administration in support of the intervention's management.

Cooperation, communication, and formalization: The networks in East City

From the perspective of the East City manager, the municipal policymakers and administration constitute one among several cooperating agencies that make the

Figure 4. East City midnight-football network map between manager and municipality.



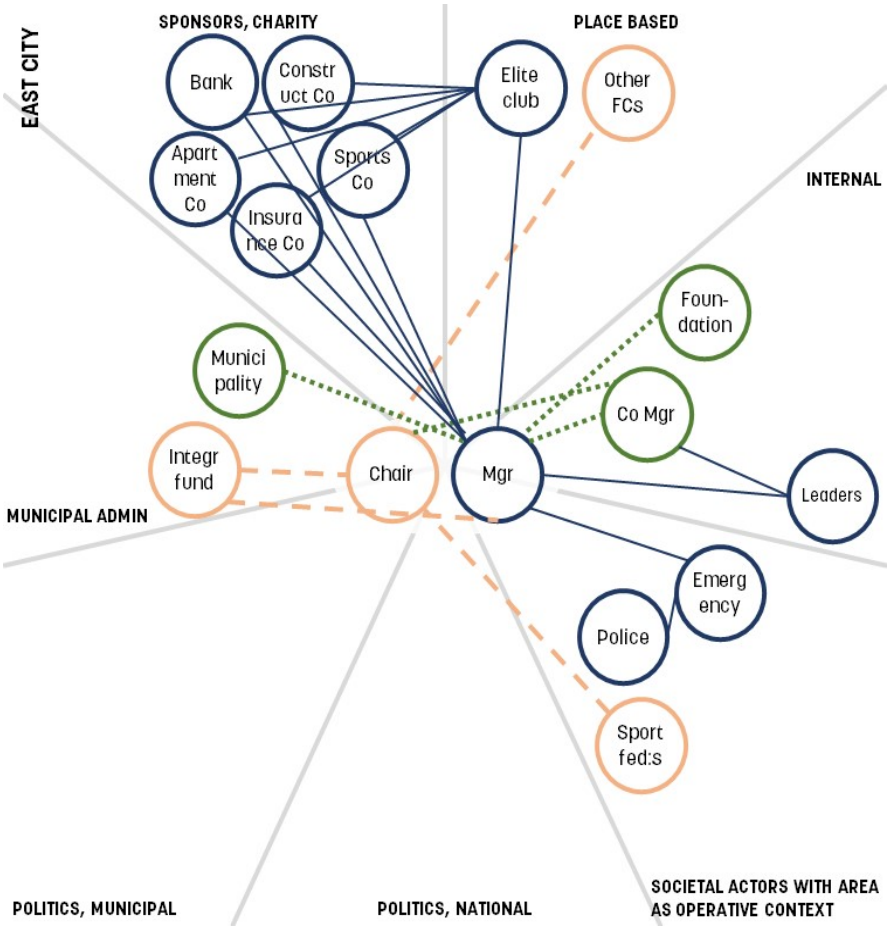
Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

intervention possible. The manager describes how the municipality has granted financial support, both in terms of economic contributions and in the form of full subsidies for the costs of the gymnasium. In terms of expected financial support, the manager states that the interventions provide great economic gains for the municipality (following alleged crime- and drug-prevention effects), something that would underpin arguments for extended financial support and more formalized forms of cooperation. The manager has "estimated that we made socioeconomic savings of 28.5 million [SEK]" from "the 15,000 [SEK]" that supported the first stage. "I believe they could have invested a little more," he continues. Moreover, the manager sees the municipal agencies as important in plans for the future expansion of the interventions, and he considers that cooperation in the forms already established with the municipal agencies is generally satisfactory. According to a well-established division of labor within the management, the manager deals with organizational functions: communication and cooperation with collaborating agencies, coach recruitment, economic administration, funding applications, etc., while the activity executive sets up the activities and supports the on-site coaches. The manager stresses the importance of being able to navigate in the form of communication and cooperation with municipal agencies and of understanding the organization of the agencies involved. Additionally, the chart developed by the manager displays a structured notion of differentiation between the various agencies facilitating the intervention and the calibration of strategies and objectives. He explains,

The municipality offered us free access to the gymnasium. . . . The Board of Culture and Leisure paid. . . . In our project application, we described the goals and what we aim for . . . and our target group and. . . . There, we basically clarify what we will do. They, really. . . only demand that we do what we said we'd do and what we wrote in the application. So we can report back. (East City MF manager)

From the viewpoint of the municipality (presented primarily by the chief civil servant of sport in the administration), the importance of structured communication is stressed. Communication has been established primarily between the intervention manager and the civil servant. Accordingly, the civil servant describes herself as a point of entrance to the

Figure 5. East City midnight football network map between manager and foundation.



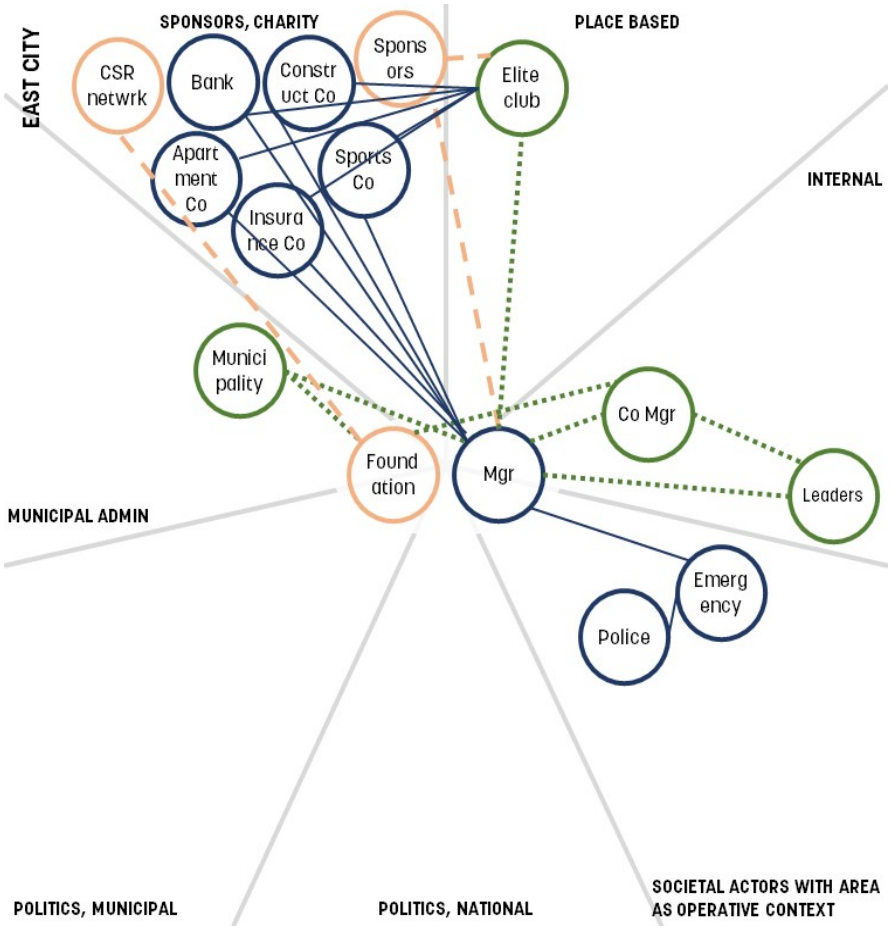
Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

municipal bureaucracy, aiming to guide the collaborating partners in their contacts with different agencies within administration and policymaking. The chief civil servant describes it as important "to create better chances to contact the municipality, so it's not an obstacle if you don't happen to meet the right person." The civil servant describes her function as being a node for sports associations and a point of reference for the distinct municipal agencies (see Figure 4). This form of interaction and communication has made possible a certain degree of calibration between the intervention objectives. Here, the Board of Culture and Leisure formulates the political goals and policy objectives. Then, the policy documents are communicated by the civil servant to the intervention manager, who commits to these objectives. Hence, the chairperson of East City Board of Culture and Leisure emphasizes that "the culture and leisure administration has great opportunities to develop applications and projects in dialogue with local community actors." This civil servant deems the intervention to be in line with the articulated policy objectives, and the intervention can therefore receive financial support. This dual calibration, illustrated in the following excerpt, shows that the distinct agencies have synchronized their objectives. The civil servant is explicit about not viewing the MF scheme as a competitor to the municipal youth and recreation centers. Even the chairperson and policymaker believe that they want to use the community as a means to promote social inclusion. She explains,

> *That's a formal agreement . . . going as an official letter to the board for decision, stipulating the commission of the board and the political goals. . . . We believe that this is the right direction, because it really is in line with the objectives of the board, and the goals that we should achieve. Midnight football is an important piece of the puzzle here, and therefore we make it an assignment. (Chief civil servant, sports issues)*

According to this statement, there are clear overlapping interests in utilizing sport to promote social goods and contribute to social inclusion, which is stipulated as a formal political objective of the municipalities' governing bodies. By means of calibrating the contacts made and the objectives expounded, a certain form of cooperation seems viable.

Figure 6. East City midnight football network map between manager and sponsors and supporters.



Note. Blue: from managers map. Orange (dashed): from chairs map. Green (dotted): agreement between maps.

From the manager's perspective, the foundation is described as being the provider of a predefined concept. Originally, as the manager expounds, the sports association of which he is a board member had discussed how to arrange open, late-evening football practices for young people in the local residential area following social tensions and turmoil. The plans were developed in dialogue with the partnering elite sports club, and it was through this club that the manager got in contact with the foundation (see Figure 5). The manager explains that "the foundation presented a similar concept" and that they "educated our coaches in their concept . . . where all coaches have distinct roles and responsibilities." The foundation promoted the concept and the local management decided to engage with the foundation. Most notably, the manager stresses that the foundation provides a framework for the five-a-side game and a pedagogical plan containing a certain division of roles for the football coaches leading the activities. According to the manager, as the intervention has developed, the foundation has played a less important role. In this sense, when planning to expand the intervention into neighboring residential areas in the city, the foundation is not described as an important partner.

From the perspective of the foundation, local management is seen as an implementer of the intervention. The foundation director explains that "we identify where there is a need . . . and we localize associations," as with the club in East City. Given that the intervention is now implemented, that it has found its forms and is being performed regularly and in a formalized way, the foundation director explains that their efforts to support the local management have become less intense. Also, the foundation director states that he had previously engaged in dialogue with a representative of the municipal administration on occasion, but not regularly. The foundation director highlights the importance of the wide network of CSR supporters and social relations that the foundation provides.

From the manager's perspective, sponsors and financial supporters are facilitators of the intervention. The various sponsors provide support in different capacities. The manager explains that "from some partners, we've been given hard cash, to pay salaries, and from others we get benefits to carry out the activities [and] from the sports gear brand unlimited equipment, really." What is interesting about the organization of sponsor interaction at East City is

how the cooperating elite sports club has its own pre-established division for CSR engagement. The manager describes how this form of operation is used to channel funding and to reach out to local sponsors (see Figure 6): "We had a clear division of roles." He continues, "[the elite sports club] manages the financing bit and nothing more . . . we do everything else." This form of arrangement enables smooth and systematic cooperation with local sponsors (however, the elite sports club has recently decided to withdraw its participation). The local intervention manager, though, expects that collaborations and support can be sustained, even without the elite sports club and its CSR institution.

The local gym owner initially encountered the intervention through a previous job at a property company, which is now engaged as a sponsor that offers, among other things, gym activities for young participants. From her perspective, the local base for cooperation is paramount. Presence in the local neighborhood, along with personal and social networks, enable connections between the local intervention management and actors such as the local fire and emergency services (whose director the gym owner knows personally). After some social turmoil in the area, the gym owner recalls that "I contacted [the manager] and said I wanted to set up a match between the MF and the local fire and emergency services," because "it's harder to throw stones at someone you know." The gym owner has enabled meetings between young people and the local authorities, although these bonds are not strategic parts of the intervention design. This part of the chart displays the local foundation of supporting networks. The representative from another important sponsor, the insurance company, particularly highlights how the local intervention management, beyond being just locally situated and connected, is also professional and organized about managing the activities and the forms of cooperation: "they're good at doing business from it . . . making sure that they're financed."

ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

This section focuses on the mechanisms, conditions, and opportunities for formalization that enable sustained operation. Centrally, this concerns the design elements of interventions that are governed or viewed as governable. In the descriptions analyzed, a range of elements of the sports-based interventions are pinpointed with respect to governing and infrastructuring. We spotlight three recurring dimensions: practice, program, and preconditions. These dimensions are not necessarily generalizable to other interventions—they are context specific with respect to the explorations made (cf. Svensson & Hambrick, 2019); however, they provide a conceptual framework and model for analyzing how interventions develop, become formalized, and create opportunities to later diffuse and multiply. This framework is generated from the findings presented and contributes to a refined understanding of the conditions of design, formalization and diffusion of interventions (cf. Schulenkorf, 2017).

First, when it comes to the footballing activities, the foundation provides an elaborate design for the practices. This involves five-a-side football and the setting up of rules and organization for play, as well as the educational arrangements with which practices are imbued. This is what the East City MF manager refers to, for instance, as the "concept" provided by the foundation. The practice is easily described and communicated and is used as the basis for diffusion.

Second, the sports-based interventions are described as also being about organizational matters, not just about the practices. Analytically, the program refers to the management of coaches (for instance, recruitment and salaries), financial administration, strategies for cooperation and communication with cooperating agencies, communication with and strategies for funding from supporters and, the capacity to apply for funding (cf. Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2018). As the foundation does not provide a structured program design, this influences East City and West City in different ways, with East City managing a program, while West City is struggling to set one up. Although both practice and program are governable levels of operation, it seems clear that it is primarily with respect to the level of practice that there is a developed design that is open for implementation at the local sites of intervention (cf. Lindsey et al., 2019). The lack of program design illustrates that the sports-based interventions develop programs locally (cf. Welty Peachey, 2018), depending on a range of contextual aspects involving, not least, personal capacities and networks (cf. Jégou & Manzini, 2008) as well as external preconditions. Accordingly, the variations in program development and the allocation of organizational competencies conditions how practices can be implemented (cf. Burnett, 2009). Governing how networks are mobilized requires organizational competencies. Such competencies seem not to be part of the central intervention design being diffused but instead need to be developed locally (cf. Björgvinsson et al., 2010). When looking at the different network visualizations from the distinct sites, it becomes obvious that access to the competences that need to be mobilized in order to facilitate the formalization of operations and to enable sustainability differs significantly.

Third, and consequently, the development of the MF interventions is described as depending on a variety of external preconditions that extend beyond the practice and the program: both local conditions concerning existing sports associations and institutions and the political strategies for civil society cooperation affect the opportunities for the interventions to achieve more formalized conditions (cf. Lindsey et al., 2019). In West City, there was a lack of well-functioning associations in the area, which eventually led to the forming of a new sports organization with the primary purpose of conducting MF. In the words of the foundation executive, "if there are no associations, as with West City, one is created." The municipal representatives originally preferred other forms of organization, for instance, cooperation through the municipal youth and cultural center. Also, policymakers and administrators in West City expressed high ambitions about controlling and having insight into the interventions being supported, which constitutes a barrier to formalized cooperation. For West City, these preconditions have meant that the calibration of intervention objectives is as yet underdeveloped. In East City, the intervention is organized through and in cooperation with a local sports association that has provided sports practice in the local residential area for over 30 years, with well-established forms of organization and even established collaborations with other associations in the city, as well as developed contacts with municipal agencies. Accordingly, existing channels of operation can be mobilized for novel purposes (cf. Burnett, 2009). In East City, both the chairperson of the board and the chief civil servant of the administration stressed the forms and opportunities for "dialogue" with the municipality, eventually resulting in formalized cooperation and substantial financial support (cf. Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019). Moreover, the municipal policymakers and administration are less engaged in controlling the program and its practices, thus constituting a lower threshold for establishing municipal cooperation, which enables the calibration of the intervention's objectives.

In conclusion, these midnight football interventions are dependent on local development at the program level. There is little diffusion of strategies between local sites of intervention, and strategies are not open for implementation. Rather, the programs are developed locally. The entirety of the interventions cannot be assessed as being deliberately designed, but they are rather the effect of personal capacities allocated and incubated in an organizational form (cf. Svensson & Seifried, 2017). A calibration, or ongoing alignment, of strategies and objectives between the various collaborating agencies has become the local strategy to increase capacities in the management of coach recruitment, financial administration, and general forms of cooperation (cf. Hillgren et al., 2011). Still, a detailed program design suitable for general implementation does not seem to be viable for different sites of intervention, because there are great variations in the preconditions of the operations (cf. Lindsey et al., 2019). However, open-ended program design structures (cf. Star & Ruhleder, 1996), could potentially be developed concerned with general reflections about and the local development of administration and cooperation (cf. Joachim et al., 2019). In this endeavor, it becomes obvious that the capabilities needed to structure the program level reside with the individuals engaged in management or within the pre-established and incubating associations and their relations (cf. Jégou et al., 2008). The intervention managers in East City and West City need to navigate among the municipality, the foundation, and the sponsors, and they are engaged alongside the other central actors in infrastructuring (cf. Svensson & Seifried, 2017). Incidentally, the East City management seems to be equipped with the necessary capabilities and resides within a municipality that is willing to integrate civil-society forms of engagement into the mix of welfare provision. In contrast, the West City management seems less equipped with such capacities and lacking in organizational structure. According to the insurance company CSR representative, "they're totally unstructured" (cf. MacIntosh et al., 2016). Furthermore, the West City manager resides in a municipality that seems eager to demand high-quality and professional welfare provisions, even in civil-society cooperation. Effectively, the levels of formalization and regularity of programming and practice seem higher in East City than in West City, even though practices that are seemingly alike are carried out at both sites. In many ways, the analytical discussion presented here resonates with findings in the previous literature on interventions involving sport for development. However, based on our empirical findings, we have systematized these levels of design, infrastructuring, and operation, enabling us to map out the challenges confronted and the opportunities for development.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous sections, we have explored the mechanisms, necessary conditions, and likelihood of interventions achieving increased formalization and sustained operation. We have also sought to better understand how they may be diffused. We looked closely at how networks of collaboration were formed and the role that they play in development and increased formalization, how collaboration, cooperation, and communication were understood from the perspectives of different agencies, and what mechanisms and conditions could be assessed as being

important for the development and formalization of interventions. Thus, we outlined how the intervention designs and infrastructuring could be understood at three different levels of operation: practice, program, and preconditions.

These findings support previous research regarding the importance of the strategic, organizational, relational, and networking capacities of the partnering agencies involved in and conducting sports-based interventions in cross-sectoral forms of cooperation. Most notably, it is the organizational, management, and network capacities (cf. Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Dobbels et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2017a; Svensson et al., 2018; Welty Peachey et al., 2018, and communication and calibration of goals (cf. MacIntosh et al., 2016; Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011; Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016) that are instrumental in developing the program structure needed for formalization and sustained operation. Taking an infrastructuring approach (Björgvinsson et al., 2010), and focusing particularly on openness to emergence and ongoing alignment (Star & Ruhleder, 1996), conditions for successful practices can be established by making the levels of programming and preconditions visible in the form of building relationships and collaborative assemblages (Jégou & Manzini, 2008). Once forms of communication and the calibration of goals were established, long-term plans of action could be facilitated, making it possible to foresee future development and management (cf. MacIntosh et al., 2016). Here, the presence of particularly capable individuals to manage and develop the programs locally benefit such endeavors (cf. Ferkins & Shilbury, 2012). Furthermore, our findings seem to support notions about starting with small operations, which can then develop and diffuse (cf. Welty Peachey et al., 2018 over time as program structures are consolidated.

With respect to situating our findings in relation to the existing research, within the scope of our empirical examination we have given an analytical account of how the particular social interventions considered here could be developed. These findings are not necessarily generalizable to wider contexts, but they do provide an abstract conceptualization of how development, formalization, and sustainable operation can be explored in interventions beyond the particular cases examined and explored here. In order to do this, it is analytically important to move beyond strict sector divides in order to understand the forms of cooperation being developed (cf. Villadsen, 2008). In order to understand the rationales of the developing cooperation, we need to avoid viewing the actors and agencies involved as being limited to their sectoral attribution. Our analysis illustrates that the agencies intersect and transcend any perceived sector distinctions. Rather, the intersections display how cooperative forms of welfare provision are developed in assemblages and how they establish cross-sectoral technologies of governing. Moreover, in addition to disseminating how the networks and forms of operation are developed, the analysis pinpoints how networks and operations facilitate and enable increased formalization and conditions for sustained operation. In addition, we want to stress that, from the perspective of networks, such conceptualizations of cooperative relations do not always grasp the organizational and managerial forms of operation (see primarily West City in this analysis). Rather, concepts such as "action nets" (Czarniawska, 2004), which place more emphasis on temporary and changeable forms of relations (networks and assemblages) and the constitutive relational activities, may provide profitable perspectives. In future research, more emphasis could be placed on examining the exact practices that constitute the networking interactions that are formative of organizations and institutions. From such a perspective, networks and organizations would rather be analyzed as institutional *effects*—we ought to "study organizations as products of organizing" actions, rather than studying networks and organizations as "the study object in themselves" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 783). In addition, looking more closely at the actions that are formative of networks and organizations means also taking the experiences of actors more systematically as a central point of recognition—action nets are not objective realities but rather entities that are experienced in a range of different ways. Such an approach would conveniently align with outlining the governmental rationality, whereby the organization and institution could be seen as a form of enabling (and constituted by) certain technologies of governing (Dean, 2010).

When it comes to the practical utility and implications of our findings, we stress the importance of paying attention to the levels of program and preconditions when developing or implementing sports-based interventions in cross-sectoral cooperation. Program mechanisms concerning coach recruitment, financial administration and strategies for funding, as well as structured and considered strategies of communication with cooperating agencies, are here noted to be instrumental, although dependent on preconditions concerning political strategies and pregiven forms of established associations. We stress the importance of infrastructuring for the program (rather than for the practices) in order to facilitate increased formalization and sustained operation. Notably, it is the program that needs to be center stage in relation to the given preconditions. Furthermore, according to the different informants, and as can be seen through the network visualizations, in order to make MF possible, not all levels, nor all aspects of each

level, need to be accessible to any one individual actor. That is, it is through the integration of resources between the actors that the different levels become available to act upon. Distinguishing between practice, program, and preconditions provides an empirically situated scheme for understanding the formalization of interventions as well as for guiding the (re)development of innovative interventions.

Critically, though, there is a wide range of dimensions in the forms of communication and cooperation, and these have been only briefly touched on in this study. They require further investigation concerning, for instance, the motivations for cooperation of the various agencies involved, the overarching policy context of cross-sectoral cooperation and the internal dimensions of organization within the local managements.

Furthermore, the examination presented here is an exploratory study of two instances of sports-based interventions. It contributes to the body of knowledge by providing conceptual frameworks for how development, formalization, and sustained operation can be understood and assessed. In this particular sense, we have only gone into analytical detail in the scrutinized interventions. However, given that sports-based intervention schemes such as the midnight football interventions analyzed here are gaining increased recognition as an innovative way of providing welfare provision and for engaging private and civil-society agencies in such provision, this needs to be empirically mapped and critically problematized. Even though our focus on football and social or educational objectives have previously been researched in other contexts (e.g., Schulenkorf et al., 2016), we suggest that explorations need to be conducted in a manner that is free from essentialist notions of civil-society authenticity or of statist bureaucracy, focusing on the enabled infrastructuring of technologies of governing in practice. Sports-based interventions may be developed and the infrastructuring and governing created and instigated based on engaged mobilization or on the basis of strategic and calibrated cooperation.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

We declare no conflicts of interest.

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From the Field

Insights on the funding landscape for monitoring, evaluation, and research in sport for development

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ABSTRACT

The international community's increasing attention to sport in policy decisions, along with growing programmatic and scholarship activity, demonstrate the need for data that facilitates evidence-informed decision making by organizations, policy actors, and funders within the Sport for Development (SfD) field. To achieve this, there is a need for effective and sustainable investment, resource mobilization, and funding streams that support meaningful and rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and research. In this paper, the SfD funding landscape as it pertains to monitoring, evaluation, and research is critically appraised by a diverse writing team. This appraisal is informed by our experiences as stakeholders, along with findings from two recent systematic reviews and knowledge accumulated from SfD literature. Various topics are discussed (e.g., intervention theories, external frameworks, targeted funding, collective impact, transparent funding climate), with the conclusion that all actors must support the pursuit of participatory, rigorous, process-centered (but outcome-aware) monitoring, evaluation, and research that aims to enhance our understanding of SfD. Ultimately, this monitoring, evaluation, and research should improve both policy and intervention design and implementation while also defining and testing more realistic, contextually relevant, culturally aware outcomes and impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Within the Sport for Development (SfD) field, there is a need for effective and sustainable investment, resource mobilization, and funding streams to support meaningful and rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and research. This can enhance the shared evidence base, resulting in evidence-informed decision making by organizations, policy actors, and funders. The priority areas identified in the Kazan Action Plan (Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport [MINEPS], 2017), the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (United Nations General Assembly [UN GA] Resolution 73/24, 2018), and Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting (2018) support this approach. However, these areas are often overlooked, with academic writing more frequently exploring the funding landscape in the context of international cooperation, intervention funding, and ownership of research and evaluative processes (Coalter, 2013; Harris & Adams, 2016; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Levermore & Beacom, 2014; Sherry et al., 2017). In this paper, there is an integration between clear policy direction on enhanced statistics and (scaled) data on sport, less "traditional" participatory methods and methodologies, and enhanced monitoring, evaluation, and research in SfD. This integration has not been a feature of previous programmatic-focused monitoring, evaluation, and research. Additionally, there have been calls for more comprehensive, critical, productive dialogue regarding the funding landscape for

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monitoring, evaluation, and research in SfD among various stakeholders. In particular, Levermore and Beacom (2014) suggested that

> *Future research and writing on the subject can only be meaningful if it engages more effectively with all stakeholders involved with the development process. This means listening to the voices of communities where sports-based interventions are being considered, as well as the views of policymakers and funding bodies working in Northern and Southern policy arenas. (p. 134)*

This paper engages in this dialogue through a writing team of various stakeholders (i.e., a scholar, a global funder CEO, an international public official, a development director, and a program evaluator and researcher), enabling a more nuanced discussion of monitoring, evaluation, and research that avoids the either–or perspective on "traditional" vs. less "traditional" approaches. In this paper, we consider questions of both rigor and scale, exploring various approaches and related concerns while outlining ways forward that align with or advance best practices. Our diverse experiences and expertise inform our discussion below, although we recognize the limitations of drawing on our own experiences and organizations. These insights are also informed by knowledge accumulated from the SfD literature and findings from two recent systematic reviews assessing the quality of evidence reported for SfD interventions (Darnell et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019). This literature is referenced below, where pertinent. Given concerns about academic writing in the SfD sector frequently restricted to those who can access journals behind paywalls (Gardam, Giles, & Hayhurst, 2017; Whitley, Farrell et al., 2019), this paper is also intended to share these insights (both new and previously cited) in one resource that is open access and accessible online, thereby broadening the audience who can engage with this dialogue.

Monitoring, evaluation, research, and related terms (e.g., accountability, impact) are defined and used differently within and beyond SfD, requiring clarity on how these terms will be used in this paper. These operational definitions are informed by content shared on the International Platform on Sport and Development (2018), among other sources (Oxfam GB, 2020; Patton, 2008; Poister, 2015). Monitoring refers to systematic, ongoing collection and review of information that documents progress against intervention plans and toward intervention objectives. When monitoring is integrated meaningfully into intervention design and daily management, learning processes unfold more rapidly, resulting in intervention adaptations that optimize impact. Data acquired through monitoring can be part of evaluation efforts, but evaluations should extend ongoing monitoring activities through more in-depth, objective assessments at specific time points. Evaluations should enhance understanding of the intervention's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Ultimately, both monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can be used to document outputs and outcomes, influence learning, decision making, and iterative planning processes, strengthen accountability, and/or demonstrate impact. A recent trend in SfD is MEL, with the "L" representing the internal learning that should result from M&E processes. Conversely, research is intended to test broader theories and produce generalizable knowledge, with questions more frequently driven by scholars (rather than intervention stakeholders) and value determined by contribution to knowledge (rather than utility of knowledge). We recognize that evaluation and research are not mutually exclusive, and there are arguments that evaluation is a subset of research (and vice versa). However, in this paper, evaluation will refer to impact of/on specific SfD policies and interventions, while research will refer to impact of/on the overall SfD field.

We now present a critical, reflexive dialogue regarding the funding landscape for monitoring, evaluation, and research in SfD among various stakeholders, beginning with a discussion of intervention theories and external frameworks, targeted funding for SfD monitoring, evaluation, and research, and collective monitoring, evaluation, and research efforts. These sections are followed by an exploration of MEL personnel, research collaborations, and transparency in the funding climate.

THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS

Our assessment begins with the need for an intentional, aligned approach to intervention planning, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation, and research. There is a need to shift from pursuing evidence through efforts that are externally defined (i.e., top-down), generalized, exclusionary, stabilizing, outcome centered, and summative to those that prioritize understanding through participatory (i.e., bottom-up), localized, collaborative, destabilizing, process centered, and formative steps (Hayhurst, 2016; Kay et al., 2016; Nicholls et al., 2011). Additionally, there are ongoing debates in the SfD field regarding theoretical frameworks, philosophy of knowledge production, and research traditions. For example, scholars question positivist forms of evidence, with concerns that it may reinforce systems of hegemony and oppression while suppressing local input and knowledge production (Kay et al., 2016; Nicholls et al., 2011). Others (notably Coalter,

2013) portray these as critiques from liberationist researchers eschewing attempts to define and measure impacts and outcomes. Following in the footsteps of Massey and Whitley (2019), "rather than lay blanket critiques across different research paradigms and epistemologies, there is a need to discuss higher levels of sophistication in both instrumental/positivist (i.e., quantitative) and descriptive/critical (i.e., qualitative) [SfD] research" (p. 177). We agree with this sentiment.

Funders can support these efforts by welcoming different theories and methodologies that are rigorous, culturally relevant, theoretically diverse, and methodologically encompassing (Massey & Whitley, 2019), with a shift toward understanding rather than evidence. This learning-centered approach was embraced by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in their effort to better understand how, why, and in which conditions SfD may influence development across IDB-sponsored initiatives in 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries (Jaitman & Scartascini, 2017). This localized, culturally specific, and developmental approach identified these future focus areas: (a) increasing physical activity levels; (b) improving data collection and evaluation, including potential harm from SfD interventions; and (c) understanding the "spill-over" of investment into other policy areas. The importance of localized, culturally specific M&E is also prioritized in a multistakeholder international initiative to monitor and evaluate the contribution of sport to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative underscores that "effective MEL is likely to be different within each regional, national, or organizational context, (and as such) there is a need to focus on supporting the institutional arrangements required in organizational contexts to operationalize monitoring systems (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019a, p.48-49). This has been operationalized in Jamaica through the development of an M&E system on strategic national priorities to be pursued in the area of sport by the national government and civil society stakeholders; this system is wholly aligned to the Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan (NDP) and Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) of the country (Jamaica Information Service, 2019).

Additionally, the trend toward separating frontline staff from monitoring, evaluation, and research findings limits the ability to truly engage all in a participative, collaborative, iterative, process-oriented approach that leads to enhanced motivation, meaningful learning, and shared decision making (Kaufman et al., 2013). It also reduces the likelihood that the findings will be locally driven, culturally specific, and developmental (Kay et al., 2016). One example that bucks this trend is Waves for Change (W4C), which embeds Peer Youth Researchers (PYRs) in each site. PYRs (18-26 years) have at least one year of experience as W4C coaches and receive training on simple, largely qualitative techniques. They explore intervention fidelity, facilitate focus group discussions, and document stories of change through photos, voice notes, short videos, etc. They interpret and share results with their on-ground teams, enabling all to meaningfully engage with and learn from MEL processes (i.e., feedback loops) (Kaufman et al., 2013). While fulfilling the PYR role, they continue working as senior coaches, facilitating a collaborative, locally driven, process-oriented approach to evaluation. Another example is from Soccer Without Borders, which has "game-ified" their M&E practices to motivate and engage their staff in consistent, complete data collection through the "M&E World Cup" (M. Connor, personal communication, February 19, 2020). This ongoing competition runs the entirety of the school year to ensure all coaches at all sites are engaged in the M&E process from baseline to endline. Coaches and intervention leaders are then guided through a "data navigation" process to ensure the data are utilized to make intervention improvements and highlight strengths.

While we agree that pursuit of understanding via these processes is necessary to ensure monitoring, evaluation, and research is meaningful to all actors, outcomes-based research should still be valued. However, instead of using performance indicators or other benchmarks that, at times, disempower organizations by prioritizing outputs (e.g., participant numbers), constructs (e.g., self-esteem), data (e.g., quantitative metrics), and frameworks (e.g., evaluation frameworks from Northern settings) preferred by external stakeholders (Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Harris & Adams, 2016; Henne, 2017; Kay et al., 2016; Svensson & Hambrick, 2019), we encourage stakeholders to outline, adopt, and test their own intervention theories. This can facilitate purposeful and thoughtful measurement of relevant outcomes and impacts, along with the inputs and processes that may (not) lead to these outcomes and impacts. Past critiques within and beyond SfD have centered on the perception of intervention theories as static products required by organizations' boards and funders rather than sought by organizations or communities themselves, particularly in the Global South (Harris & Adams, 2016; James, 2011). However, if they are embraced as evolving products and processes that are participative, collaborative, iterative, and developmental, they can unlock the flexibility necessary for practitioners to cultivate dynamic, responsive, effective interventions (Haudenhuyse et al., 2013; Nicholls et al., 2011; Rogers, 2008). For example, if these theories are developed, monitored, and evaluated by those delivering interventions, there is the potential to better understand how change happens in

different settings. Additionally, the assumptions in these intervention theories can be tested, including the scale of the inputs required to deliver the envisaged/claimed outcomes and impacts. The latter is particularly important in informing policy and the scale of investment required to ensure the contribution of SfD to envisaged outcomes is realized.

To do this, funders are encouraged to set expectations (with associated funding and support) for organizations to outline, adopt, and test intervention theories or simply assess intervention quality, fidelity, and utility, along with the critical factors that may impact intervention efficacy. Ideally, this means supporting organizations in setting up their own MEL frameworks and/or utilizing key public policy frameworks (particularly those at a domestic level) rather than requiring specific approaches (e.g., logic models, logframes) that may prioritize funder needs (Kay, 2012). This responds to calls for truly collaborative MEL processes in mutually respectful climates that deconstruct inequitable power dynamics and support the coproduction of knowledge among all involved (e.g., practitioners, researchers, donors) (Hayhurst, 2016; Kay et al., 2016; Nicholls et al., 2011). This could be achieved during the funding start-up period, with remote or in-person guidance provided for organizations to establish their own framework (or adopt/adapt an existing framework) that enables accountability to the funder (e.g., reporting requirements), aligns with domestic policy priorities, and develops processes that test assumptions, encourage learning, and examine impact of scaling (if expected) on intervention quality, fidelity, and utility. Engaging in these conversations early on, before targets are agreed on and reports are developed, can help organizations avoid mission drift and ensure ownership of their framework. It is also important to note that funders, whether governmental or nongovernmental, should outline, adopt, and test their own institutional intervention theories that relate to the portfolio of their partnerships or SfD investments toward a particular policy or development objective. A pertinent example is work by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2017) in Brazil, which analyzed the contribution of sports and physical activity toward good health, sociability, cognition, productivity, and quality of life within the country. Key principles emerged from this data to guide interventions aimed at enhancing and refining the engagement of people in sport and physical activity and its associated impact. These include: (a) shared responsibility to enhance participation between the population, the public sector, private initiatives, and the third sector; (b) the importance of developing more active school environments; (c) a need to address inequality of access to sport and physical activity; and (d) a requirement to broaden the understanding of sport and physical activity as a tool for improving health in the country.

TARGETED FUNDING

Sustainable and diverse investments, funding streams, and resource mobilization can be created specifically for monitoring, evaluation, and research, which aligns with recommendations in the Kazan Action Plan (MINEPS, 2017) and the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (UN GA Resolution 73/24, 2018). For example, the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union funded the Sport & Society Research Unit (2020) at Vrije Universiteit Brussel to develop a user-friendly M&E manual that helps SfD organizations aiming to increase the level of employability of their adolescent participants. This project is a collaboration with a number of SfD partners, including Street League, Magic Bus, Oltalom Sport Association, and Sport 4 Life UK. Additionally, the International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev), in partnership with the Japan Sport Council, is developing a guidebook/toolkit on how to apply sport as a developmental tool, which will include a focus on intervention planning, theory, management, and M&E (B. Sanders, personal communication, February 20, 2020). Targeted funding could also support: (a) research examining questions about intervention efficacy (e.g., rigorous experimental research designs) and (b) research examining questions about beneficiaries, moderating variables, etc. (e.g., alternative/flexible research designs that are still rigorous). Funders should also consider removing/minimizing restrictions in the use of these funds, along with welcoming research applications developed by frontline delivery organizations, with partnerships developed that embrace local and (if relevant) global priorities. For example, W4C (a South African nonprofit organization) partnered with The New School (a New York university) for research examining the physiological indicators of improved mental health among participants. This research is funded by Laureus Sport for Good (an international NGO) and advised by the University of Cape Town (a local university). This study was not designed in the funder's boardroom or at a university but on the ground in South Africa. Setting research objectives at the local level removes some elements of top-down, Global North performance indicators defining success or failure (Henne, 2017). This local evidence is particularly necessary if SfD is to have greater success in accessing local (federal, state, and municipal) government funding for sport that is directed toward delivering nonsport outcomes. Examples of public funding delivered at scale, and yet still driven by local belief in impact, are Programa Segundo Tempo in Brazil (Reverdito et al., 2016) and Sport England (2020).

COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

Organizations can also engage in collective monitoring, evaluation, and research efforts, with the Kazan Action Plan (MINEPS, 2017) and the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (UN GA Resolution 73/24, 2018) both calling for improved, coordinated, collaborative monitoring, evaluation, and research efforts. This begins with the development of common indicators for SfD, such as those currently under development in response to Action 2 in the Kazan Action Plan (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019a), along with other common measurement approaches (e.g., the UK Sport for Development Coalition). The Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative (2020) is working to establish shared definitions and methods for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on youth demographics, participation, progress, and outcomes for the SfD field. Svensson and Hambrick (2019) describe an SfD organization hosting "an international gathering of similar organizations from across the world to meet and develop shared mental health indicators" (p. 546). One caveat to this approach is the potential for organizations to use irrelevant indicators simply because of the need to collect data for reporting, particularly when externally driven quantitative metrics may supersede alternative forms of evidence driven by grassroots practitioners (Henne, 2017; Kay et al., 2016). Another concern is that indicators tend to be biased in favor of those in power (e.g., Global North vs. Global South actors; funders vs. practitioners) and tend to negate the diversity of conditions in different contexts (Henne, 2017; Kay et al., 2016). To minimize these concerns, capacity building efforts should help organizations determine if (and when) shared indicators can drive their own learning and decision making, with funders and policy actors supporting organizations' decisions (and thereby disrupting traditional power dynamics that typically subjugate knowledge) (Nicholls et al., 2011). The establishment of an open-ended working group structure to support a diverse group of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating the contribution of sport-based policy and programming to the SDGs in their specific contexts is an example of this recommendation in practice (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019b).

Not only do these steps ease organizations' efforts to improve the quality of their monitoring, evaluation, and research, but they also allow for greater benchmarking and cross-comparison (Svensson & Hambrick, 2019), along with the potential to demonstrate collective impact and engage in systems thinking. Funders should support these efforts, particularly since perceived competition over funds may discourage collaboration (Lindsey, 2013). This can begin with supporting common indicators and events that promote coordinated and collaborative efforts, rather than requiring organizations to respond to donor-defined targets, M&E systems, and so on. A prime example of a collective impact strategy is in Brazil with Women Win and their partner, Empodera (M. Schweickart, personal communication, February 20, 2020). They are creating a coalition of institutions that collectively seek the empowerment of girls and women to and through sport, with partners ranging from traditional sport (e.g., federations), SfD, and nonsport partners. Coalition participants will collectively agree on how to measure and report progress that will drive learning and improvement, with the first step already taken through a co-creation workshop in which a short list of common indicators were identified by coalition participants.

This type of collaboration can unlock funding opportunities within and beyond SfD through an expanding, shared, and rigorous evidence base (Svensson & Hambrick, 2019). However, this collective approach should not minimize local or national perspectives in favor of predetermined criteria parachuted into diverse contexts and cultures (Giulianotti et al., 2016; Hayhurst, 2016; Henne, 2017; Kay et al., 2016; Nicholls et al., 2011). Instead, coordinated, collaborative monitoring, evaluation, and research efforts should attend to "bottom-up," contextually relevant, and culturally attuned approaches. For example, Laureus Sport for Good's "Model City" collective impact approach in New Orleans supports a group of SfD organizations working within a shared, locally developed theory of change, with external funding secured for the collective. This also highlights the value of domestic funders and policy actors (particularly within the Global South), compared to the past "dominance of Global North ideologies, agendas, and input within many [SfD] interventions" (Straume, 2019, p. 54).

In making this recommendation, it is important to recognize that funders, whether public authorities or nongovernmental, are often required to aggregate data to justify and report on the combined scale of investment in SfD. In response, funders establishing a common syntax to categorize the "type" and "level" of change that a beneficiary might experience and organizing the aggregation of varied programmatic data accordingly is recommended ahead of imposing common logic models or logframes. Drawing on the framework proposed by the London Benchmarking Group (Corporate Citizenship, 2018), this approach has been recommended by the Commonwealth Secretariat as they coordinate international collaboration to deliver on Action 2 of the Kazan Action Plan (MINEPS, 2017).

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING PERSONNEL

Research lines and methodologies in SfD have not advanced as they should have over the past 20 years, with the systematic reviews confirming longstanding fears that the rigor in SfD research is lacking (Massey & Whitley, 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019). This is partially attributed to a lack of funding that would provide the training, resources, and time required for rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and research (Kaufman et al., 2013). More specifically, the majority of funds are tagged for specific project delivery costs, rather than untagged (e.g., no/minimal restrictive conditions) funding overhead costs that include monitoring, evaluation, and research. Without this support, organizations struggle to hire and retain qualified, experienced staff for monitoring, evaluation, and research roles (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014). MEL personnel and researchers cannot address deficiencies in their training and education in this area (Kaufman et al., 2013; Whitley, Farrell et al., 2019) and are also pushed toward "low cost" work, which often excludes: (a) experimental, longitudinal, multisite, and multigroup designs; (b) valid, reliable, culturally relevant, and behaviorally based measures (e.g., direct measures of behavior change); and (c) deeply contextualized research (e.g., within local social, cultural, and political climates). Additionally, monitoring, evaluation, and research is frequently driven by "the need to demonstrate accountability," with organizations sometimes faced with "non-negotiable requirements to collect data in forms specified by external partners" rarely "designed on the basis of local organizational culture, or with due consideration of basic practical issues such as language competence, administrative experience, IT skills and indeed access to electricity for IT systems" (Kay, 2012, p. 891). This certainly presents complications for organizations in conducting rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and research that is meaningful to all stakeholders, including the organizations themselves, and continues a legacy of neocolonial practices and power imbalances that undermine the autonomy, agency, and self-determination of local organizations (Hayhurst, 2016; Henne, 2017; Kay et al., 2016; Nicholls et al., 2011).

To address these concerns, traditional funding streams must be activated for training and education, although attention must be directed toward avoiding the perpetuation of neocolonial and inequitable practices (Welty Peachey et al., 2018; Whitley, Farrell et al., 2019). Just as SfD organizations have been critiqued for relying on professionals and volunteers from the Global North for intervention implementation in Global South settings (Giulianotti et al., 2016), concerns should be raised about MEL personnel and researchers who may approach monitoring, evaluation, and research in a manner that is not contextually or culturally relevant (Kay et al., 2016). This is also applicable for the tools being used for data collection, entry, and analysis, with a need for more efficiency, efficacy, contextual relevance, and cultural awareness (Kaufman et al., 2013). In response, Laureus Sport for Good has established learning communities facilitated by experienced MEL practitioners with extensive field experience, with SfD practitioners learning together about (in)effective, (ir)relevant monitoring, evaluation, and research practices. W4C hosts and participates in communities of practice at local and international levels, while streetfootballworld (2020b) facilitates forums in which key players share knowledge and exchange ideas (e.g., MEL). On a national level, Laureus USA partners with Algorhythm to support organizations' MEL efforts, including the provision of a user-friendly platform (and related support) that facilitates pre/post program evaluation, along with developing the capacity of program staff to "make meaning" of the data. Another novel approach is funding fellowships and research grants for graduate students that can raise the level of trained MEL personnel and researchers active in the SfD field. For example, the Sport-Based Youth Development Fellowship at Adelphi University has provided students with access to a tuition-free Master's degree, with specific training and education within SfD (including monitoring, evaluation, and research) (Whitley et al., 2017). Another approach is being led by the International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev), in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Australian government, to develop a massive open online course (MOOC) on SfD. The MOOC will promote learning across the SfD field, including particular content on monitoring, evaluation, and research (B. Sanders, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Another avenue for producing meaningful, rigorous research within SfD is through research collaborations between organizations, researchers, research institutions, and policy actors (Kaufman et al., 2013). These partnerships can unlock innovation and learning through the co-production of knowledge (Nicholls et al., 2011), such as economic modeling to determine potential impact if investment is scaled or social return on investment (SROI) studies or cost-benefit analyses exploring the question of when SfD is a "best buy" option (Keane, Hoare, Richards, Bauman, & Bellew, 2019). Although this is an important theme, tokenistic measures such as cost per child can drive

organizations to inflate numbers or focus on reach over quality, so these analyses must be implemented sensitively. An innovative approach is the research led by the Global Obesity Prevention Center team that is part of Public Health Informatics Computational and Operations Research (GOPC, 2019). These groups developed a computer simulation model that demonstrates the connection between increased physical activity levels and overweight and obesity prevalence, direct medical costs, years of life, and productivity. Conducting this research without the use of computer modeling would have been prohibitively expensive, if even possible. Another exemplar is from Grassroot Soccer, which has been quite prolific in their partnerships with researchers; a 2018 publication cited 276 research studies since 2005 in over 20 countries (Keyte et al., 2018). These efforts not only supported the development and growth of their organization, but also contributed knowledge to the wider SfD field. The Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative provides another example of a meaningful collaboration with a research institution, with Temple University leading the external evaluation of Game On Philly, funded by the Office of Women's Health within the Department of Health and Human Services through the Youth Engagement in Sports (YES) Initiative (B. Devine, personal communication, February 24, 2020).

A recent survey of actors in the SfD field indicates interest among both practitioners and researchers in developing these partnerships, with expressed hope that these efforts (among others) can enhance monitoring, evaluation, and research within SfD (Whitley, Farrell et al., 2019). However, these partnerships present novel challenges that require additional training, time, and resources (Collison & Marchesseault, 2018; Keyte et al., 2018), with the potential to extend top-down power relations between funders and recipients (Kay, 2012). For example, NGOs may perceive commissioned evaluation and research as confirmation that their knowledge, ability, and reliability are being questioned (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Levermore, 2011). Also, researchers may spend more time with the funders who commissioned the evaluation than the organization (and practitioners) themselves, given geographic barriers, all of which may limit their ability to align the research with organizational priorities (Kay, 2012). Thus, these relationships are far from straightforward, with a need for nuanced support that is rigorous, (frequently) resource intensive, and meaningful to those who will ultimately use the findings (e.g., organizations, not just policy actors or funders).

Addressing these concerns begins with resolving one of the biggest challenges for those seeking to collaborate: identifying potential partners (Keyte et al., 2018). Could a matching program similar to the National Resident Matching Program in the medical field be created for organizations, researchers, and policy actors seeking partnerships? To avoid perpetuating top-down power relations, another step should be careful and comprehensive examination of the geopolitical realities of knowledge production (given social, economic, and geographic inequalities) (Darnell et al., 2018; Nicholls et al., 2011), along with the development of local research capacity such that local knowledge production can unfold (Kay et al., 2016). Governance should also be considered thoughtfully, including the make-up of policy development and research advisory groups, grant assessment committees, and journal editorial boards, with a particular focus on whether there is geographic parity. For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat sets targets and then monitors and reports on the geographic diversity of key advisory panels and expert bodies. It may also be beneficial to seek domestic partnerships among/within these groups, given concerns with neocolonialism and power dynamics are often related to international partnerships. If these partnerships are international, organizations and researchers may be wise to draw on the approach and learning from Lindsey and colleagues' (2015) example of a North-South partnership of researchers in order to enhance the diversity of perspectives impacting the data collection and knowledge generation process. The League Bilong Laif intervention in Papua New Guinea represents a different partnership approach that includes both local and international constituents, with funding by the Australian government, delivery by the Australian Rugby League, implementation by local staff and volunteers, and evaluation by Australian-based researchers, in partnership with the Papua New Guinea government, Department of Education, and Rugby Football League (Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016). While there were challenges early on due to uneven power relations, among other factors, there were a number of benefits as well. Sherry and Schulenkorf (2016) cited a need for all stakeholders to be "convinced by, committed to, and comfortable with the overall purpose of the initiative" in order for the intervention to be sustainable and "potentially grow impacts for wider community benefit" (p. 528). On a separate note, it is critical for research partnerships to ensure meaningful learning for all, with the expectation (and related support) for external researchers to disseminate findings to all organization actors through relevant, accessible methods (e.g., workshops with frontline staff, meetings with administrators) and support organizations with ongoing learning and decision making as a result.

TRANSPARENCY

Yet another challenge in the SfD field is the lack of transparency in reporting evaluation and research, including

conflicts of interest (e.g., undeclared funders), methodologies pursued (e.g., unclear sampling procedures), and results uncovered (e.g., infrequent null and negative outcomes) (Collison & Marchesseault, 2018; Langer, 2015; Massey & Whitley, 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019). There is a need for these norms to be deconstructed, as the SfD field cannot progress if we only have access to rose-tinted research findings. We must strive for a deeper understanding of SfD interventions, rather than simply sharing "what works" (Harris & Adams, 2016). There is also a need for (self-)reflexivity in which the messiness of monitoring, evaluation, and research in SfD is openly and honestly discussed, as the whole field stands to benefit when methods are seen as a process enabling more transparent results (Darnell et al., 2018).

How can funders support this shift? The first step is changing norms and expectations in the funding climate. This may begin with setting/refining expectations that organizations provide sufficient methodological details in their funding proposals and reports to allow for critical appraisal of the methods, methodologies, and evidence. To ensure this does not prematurely close any organizations out of funding opportunities, it may be prudent to provide adequate resources and support for organizations learning to co-create and describe their monitoring, evaluation, and research methods and methodologies. Another shift in the funding culture is the need for clear, proactive, and earnest communication from funders about their commitment to and support for organizations testing their intervention theories and identifying and reporting null and negative findings, along with engagement in constructive conversations in which grantees are encouraged to share both successes and failures (Svensson & Hambrick, 2018). The current competitive funding climate within SfD can discourage NGO staff from "highlighting particular weaknesses" as this may "have a detrimental effect on project funding, even when these limitations are the result of broader structural issues beyond the [organization's] control" (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014, p. 209). There needs to be a culture change within the SfD funding landscape. When organizations are able to operate in a funding climate where assessments are expected to demonstrate "what needs to improve" as well as "what works," the tide will start to shift. This will result in more honest evaluation and scholarship and more authentic partnerships that can address organizations' needs. Underpinning this is the sometimes unquantifiable issue of trust, with Svensson and Hambrick (2019) noting this as a critical feature for innovative organizations that can result in failure occurring more frequently— and organizational learning resulting from these attempts at innovation. Additionally, these findings can add to the SfD knowledge base in meaningful ways by being constructively critical rather than evangelical of sport's developmental potential. One innovative example of cultivating trust unfolds through Common Goal (streetfootballworld, 2020a), whose members (i.e., players, managers, businesses, and fans) pledge 1% of their earnings to unite the global football community in advancing the SDGs. These earnings are reallocated in two ways: (a) as unrestricted funds directly to high-impact football NGOs previously vetted by streetfootballworld, utilizing 42 assessment points related to organizational strengths, programmatic strengths, and global cooperation; and (b) to the signature fund, where organizations propose collaborative, high-impact initiatives (e.g., Social Enterprise Initiative, Good Menstrual Hygiene Management, Play Proud) that pool resources, expertise, and commitment, with these collaborating organizations responsible for creating the budget (without a cap), identifying the timeline, and (if funded) overseeing the implementation. Both approaches to funding from Common Goal are founded on trust in the implementing organizations, which is critical for innovation, learning, and growth.

Another challenge to transparency in monitoring, evaluation, and research is the short funding cycles (Lindsey, 2017), with SfD interventions often expected "to demonstrate immediate results" that address donor-defined targets (Sherry et al., 2017, p. 304). Creating a learning-focused environment (Sugden, 2010) in which null and negative findings are viewed as an opportunity for honest, critical reflection over longer funding cycles can lead to meaningful change, rather than a threat to funding. Additionally, more rigorous designs can be pursued through longitudinal designs, creating the opportunity to test different parts of intervention theories while also enabling funders to become invested in organizations' growth over time, rather than meeting specific benchmarks for their funding portfolio.

This knowledge sharing cannot be limited to organizations, their funders, and other internal stakeholders, as this will limit the shared evidence base and, ultimately, the ability for other organizations, policy actors, and funders to make evidence-informed decisions. Organizations should make their monitoring, evaluation, and research accessible, as recommended by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (2019), in an effort to improve "coordination, accountability, and effectiveness" among governments, multilateral institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, and others. The UK charity Street League's impact dashboard is an excellent example of this within the SfD field (publicly available at https://www.streetleague.co.uk/impact). Additionally, funders can support existing/new

Table 1. Actionable takeaways for monitoring, evaluation, and research in sport for development.

Practitioners

1. Use participatory processes to document "on the ground" experiences of what is and is not working for SfG interventions.
2. Incorporate MEL methods that are accessible and meaningful to those delivering the intervention, such as photographs, voice notes, and video clips that can be easily embedded into existing workload and practices.
3. Hold regular internal learning meetings as an organization where "on the ground" experience is presented along with formal data collection.
4. Close the feedback loop by ensuring all stakeholders are engaged in the MEL cycle, with a particular focus on sharing programmatic and organizational changes as a result of their participation.
5. Involve target communities in the development of MEL frameworks (ideally before engaging donors) such that stakeholders define what success looks like for them, as well as what meaningful contribution the intervention can make to the wider community.
6. Consider mixed methods for data collection, utilizing quantitative tools where necessary, but also placing value on qualitative data so individual voices and lived experiences are prioritized and provide appropriate context.
7. Celebrate challenges as well as successes in reports and discussions with donors, as this cultivates opportunities for shared learning and provision of support for addressing these challenges.

Researchers

1. Seek a deeper understanding of SfD in practice through different theories and methodologies which are rigorous, culturally relevant, theoretically diverse, and methodologically encompassing.
2. Cultivate mutually respectful climates among all involved (e.g., practitioners, participants, stakeholders, etc.) that deconstruct power dynamics and support the co-production of knowledge.
3. Engage in contextually and culturally relevant capacity building efforts for MEL to enhance local input and knowledge production.
4. Pursue rigorous, innovative, and meaningful research collaborations with SfD organizations, with a particular focus on those who will ultimately use the findings.
5. Ensure meaningful learning for all, including the dissemination of findings to organization actors through relevant, accessible methods and the support of organizations with ongoing learning and decision making.
6. Enhance the transparency in reporting evaluation and research, from declaring funders and detailing methodologies to uncovering null and negative findings.

Table 1 cont'd. Actionable takeaways for monitoring, evaluation, and research in sport for development.

Funders

1. Make funding available for practitioners to better understand their own programming and impact, rather than deliver on the need to evidence the impact of the funder's donation.
2. Seek alignment with other funders to reduce the complex web of structures, policies, and funding streams that SfD organizations must navigate and for which they must provide evidence.
3. Do not disempower organizations by prioritizing performance indicators or other benchmarks that focus purely on outputs (e.g., participant numbers), constructs (e.g., self-esteem), data (e.g., quantitative metrics), and frameworks (e.g., evaluation frameworks from Northern settings).
4. Aim to shift from pursuing evidence through efforts that are externally defined (i.e., top-down), generalized, exclusionary, stabilizing, outcome centered, and summative to those that prioritize the pursuit of understanding through participatory (i.e., bottom-up), localized, collaborative, destabilizing, process centered, and formative efforts.
5. Accept that theories of change and similar models used by grantees are not static, but iterative processes requiring ongoing study and ongoing dialogue between stakeholders.
6. Allow partners the flexibility to cultivate dynamic, responsive, effective interventions rather than prioritizing the demonstration of intervention logic to funders.
7. Welcome different theories and methodologies that are rigorous, culturally relevant, theoretically diverse, and methodologically encompassing, with a shift toward understanding rather than evidence.
8. Adopt and test institutional intervention theories that relate to funders' portfolios of partnerships or SfD investments toward a particular policy or development objective.
9. Support capacity building such that organizations can effectively and sustainably deliver and manage their interventions.
10. Create sustainable and diverse investments, funding streams, and resource mobilization specifically for monitoring, evaluation, and research.
11. Take meaningful steps toward changing norms and expectations for SfD organizations related to transparency, facilitating a deeper understanding of SfD.

Table 1 cont'd. Actionable takeaways for monitoring, evaluation, and research in sport for development.

Policymakers
1. In considering both the policy implications and potential to scale SfD initiatives, compare the outcomes and impacts reported (i.e., the results, what changed) with the inputs required and robustness of the intervention theory presented. Assessing the investment required to achieve outcomes and impacts reported and credibility of the intervention theory will assist in assessing the implications for public policy decisions and potential investment at scale.
2. Encourage SfD organizations, their partners, and their funders to emphasize contributing to, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on their impact on local priorities and public policy objectives, alongside (or in preference to) targets defined by partners or funders outside the local/national context.
3. Consider outcomes and impacts reported through SfD interventions in comparison to other interventions within the same geographic context to assess if SfD constitutes a "best buy" option in working to address specific policy priorities and development issues.
4. Consider both quantitative and qualitative data, being aware of not giving undue priority to scaled data that does not provide an understanding of how or why change occurred or case studies and narratives that lack credible intervention theories or data that demonstrates the scale of impact beyond that presented in case studies.
5. To assess the policy implications of SfD interventions, consider: (a) what components may or may not be feasible or appropriate to replicate in other locations (e.g., intervention curriculum, delivery models); (b) what learning can inform wider legislative and policy frameworks (e.g., approaches to safeguarding children, youth-led governance); and (c) what components are unique to the community and context within which the intervention was delivered.

platforms and networks that contribute to the shared evidence base, as recommended in the Kazan Action Plan (MINEPS, 2017) and the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace (UN GA Resolution 73/24, 2018). This includes the International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev), which is supported by Laureus Sport for Good and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Other potential directions could be the creation of funding streams that invite organizations to: (a) study (un)known weaknesses in their programming, with the expectation that these organizations share their findings in public outlets (e.g., a TED Talk-style SfD forum, "The F Word: Learning through Failure" event in London in October 2019); (b) openly share past null/negative findings and the steps taken to address these results; (c) join partnerships in which individuals/organizations with current challenges are matched with those with similar backgrounds; or (d) join think tanks with others currently struggling with monitoring, evaluation, and research.

CONCLUSION

Along with knowledge accumulated from the SfD literature and two recent systematic reviews (Darnell et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019; Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet, & Borbee, 2019), our writing team's diverse experiences and expertise informed our discussion above, which we recognize has its limitations. A set of actionable takeaways are outlined in Table 1, which were culled from the dialogue shared above.

Ultimately, we must keep in mind the questions that Jeanes and Lindsey (2014) challenged us with: "what evidence is required, for whom, to serve what purpose, and how this evidence is collected in practice?" (p. 212) This is complicated by the diversity of funders and bodies to which organizations are responsible (including their own communities and different levels of government), often resulting in a range of reporting expectations to the community, to public authorities, to funders, and to other stakeholders. This can add to the monitoring, evaluation, and research expectations, requiring compliance with various external frameworks and standards and the collection of varying types of data (e.g., quantitative and qualitative evidence, anecdotal evidence and narratives, visual evidence). Additionally, recent efforts by the international community (e.g., MINEPS, 2017; UN GA Resolution 73/24, 2018; Commonwealth Sports Ministers, 2018) call for greater alignment through common standards and methods. The key is ensuring that the needs of the organizations and local communities are kept at the forefront—along with the needs of the broader SfD community. SfD organizations have already shown resistance to mission drift in order to secure funding (Giulianotti, 2011), but this is a constant negotiation amid the power and associated resources within the SfD field (Nicholls et al., 2011; Straume, 2019).

Ultimately, we believe all actors must continue to support the pursuit of participatory, rigorous, process-centered (but outcome-aware) monitoring, evaluation, and research that aims to enhance our understanding of SfD. This monitoring, evaluation, and research should improve both policy and intervention design and implementation while also defining and testing more realistic, contextually relevant, culturally aware outcomes and impacts.

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Original Research

Advancing the sport for development field: Perspectives of practitioners on effective organizational management

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perspectives of SFD practitioners on how SFD organizations can be more effectively managed for sustainability and meaningful impact. With a goal to respond to the call that SFD research should reflect on its effectiveness and the managerial direction in which it is going, we engaged with a variety of SFD practitioners to seek out their voices as well as to illuminate their reflections on and inputs to the field. Thirty practitioners from 29 SFD organizations participated in the study. Practitioners' advice for effectively managing SFD organizations included enhancing sustainability, having a passion for sport and SFD, gaining experience before taking action, engaging in professional training, establishing academic partnerships, developing a professional and entrepreneurial mindset, and utilizing online resources. Practical implications, recommendations, and future research directions are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the field of sport-for-development (SFD) has expanded its presence and legitimacy within the context of local and international development (Schulenkorf, 2017). For instance, organizations operating grassroots SFD initiatives are found in more than 120 countries (Svensson & Woods, 2017). A sampling of outcomes examined by scholars include social inclusion, violence prevention, prejudice reduction, and positive life changes (see Schulenkorf et al., 2016 for a comprehensive review of SFD scholarship). Overall, this body of work has shown that SFD interventions and programs have the potential to evince positive outcomes particularly at the microlevel, provided that the programs are managed well and thoughtfully designed based on sound program theory.

Given the importance of management and program design to the SFD field, significant scholarly attention has begun to focus on organizational and managerial aspects, including strategic management and organizational capacity building (Adams et al., 2018; Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Dixon & Svensson, 2019; Harris, 2018; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016), managing tensions between global hegemony and local empowerment (Lindsey et al., 2017; McSweeney et al., 2019), partnerships (Svensson & Loat, 2019; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018), and leadership (Kang & Svensson, 2019; Nols et al., 2019 Welty Peachey, Burton et al., 2018). Scholars have also taken a critical approach to much of this research, identifying the neocolonial tendencies of many SFD organizations (Darnell et al., 2018; Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011) and an evangelical approach whereby sport is championed as solving societal issues without empirical evidence to substantiate these claims (Coalter, 2007, 2013; Harris & Adams, 2016).

Schulenkorf's (2017) recent review of managerial scholarship related to SFD synthesized findings and

Keywords: sport for development; sport for development and peace; SFD practitioners; future of SFD; suggestions from the SFD field; SFD management

suggested areas of future research. He also advocated the critical need to reflect on managerial practices within the SFD field in times of decreased funding opportunities and proliferation of programs and scholarship. Previous scholarship has gathered SFD scholars' views about challenges and issues within SFD, including their views and experiences with program outcomes, partnerships, and organizational capacity issues, among others (Harris, 2018; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Shin, 2019; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018).

As scholars have recognized, the rapidly changing culture and surroundings often cause SFD organizations to operate in an environment where they seek to address broad social issues (Kang & Svensson, 2019). This often requires SFD practitioners to engage in multitasking to best deliver both sport and development programs and services (Lindsey & Darby, 2018; Svensson, 2017; Thorpe & Chawansky, 2017), which may present unique challenges to SFD practitioners. Responding to these challenges, more studies have recently focused on practitioners' perspectives about the most important elements for successfully managing their organizations and ultimately achieving their goals (Spaaij et al., 2018). For example, a study by Whitley et al. (2019) investigated current issues and challenges from the lived experiences of SFD actors (practitioners, scholars, and students). They found that practitioners had interest in effective monitoring and evaluation methods as well as in improved, accessible training. The current study extends this growing body of literature by focusing more explicitly on what practitioners perceived to be the most important for further improving the management of SFD organizations in the future.

Moreover, as Giulianotti et al. (2019) pointed out, the global SFD landscape is shifting due to the emergence of international issues and challenges such as the declaration of the United Nations' (UN) 2015 Sustainable Development Goals that include sport's role in promoting global peace and development; the closure of the UN's Office of Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP); and the role of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in SFD, as the United Nations handed this remit to the IOC. In addition, the need for advanced and forward-thinking strategies for managing SFD organizations is underscored in a number of recent policy documents such as the Kazan Action Plan (Svensson & Loat, 2019). As such, within this changing SFD landscape and responding to SFD scholars' consensus for the importance of considering managerial aspects of SFD (Giulianotti, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2017; Sherry et al., 2015; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Thorpe & Chawansky, 2017), the purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of SFD practitioners on how SFD organizations can be more effectively managed for sustainability and meaningful impact.

Understanding SFD practitioners' forward-thinking perspectives is necessary as they have hands-on experience in the field, particularly regarding ongoing critical issues such as the recent changes in the SFD global landscape (Giulianotti et al., 2019), proliferation of programs despite the fluctuation of funding possibilities (Svensson & Woods, 2017), and organizational failure to deliver desired developmental outcomes (Levermore, 2008; Svensson & Loat, 2019). We engaged with a variety of SFD practitioners to provide an overarching and holistic picture of the field drawn from practitioner insights. The following research question was developed to frame the study: What are practitioners' perspectives on advancing the SFD field through effective management of SFD organizations?

This study is significant, given that SFD has been gaining attention from various sectors ranging from public policy to nongovernmental development initiatives, and practitioners' perspectives can help shape SFD agendas, policy, and management strategies for the future. Moreover, this study is an empirical effort to obtain first-hand perspectives of SFD practitioners. It is important to gain a more holistic understanding about managing SFD organizations from a more robust set of stakeholders, in this study's case, through direct engagement with SFD practitioners to ascertain their perspectives.

CURRENT STATUS AND PRESSING ISSUES IN SFD

Sport has been continuously recognized as having capacity to enact social change and achieve a wide range of global developmental goals (Raw et al., 2019). An increasing number of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, national sport organizations, sport practitioners, and researchers have engaged with sport's potential merit as a development tool, followed by proliferation of development initiatives and programs from multiple sectors using sport as a means of fostering social impacts (Levermore, 2008; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Navigating such a global development sector that involves complex organizational structures can be challenging for SFD organizations and practitioners (Coalter, 2007; Dixon & Svensson, 2019; Raw et al., 2019). More recently, decreased funding opportunities and change of SFD governance at the global level have posed new challenges for SFD practitioners.

With a goal to advance SFD management, scholars have suggested there is a distinct need to conduct rigorous research on the following prominent trends and issues: the

formation of sustainable partnerships with various entities, including research partnerships (Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018), ways to enhance organizational capacity management, including human resource management, monitoring and evaluation, and social entrepreneurship (Cohen et al., 2019; Cohen & Welty Peachey, 2015; Harris, 2018; Hayhurst, 2014; Kang & Svensson, 2019; McSweeney, 2018; Svensson & Seifried, 2017; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017), bridging the theory and practice divide (Coalter, 2010; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2012; Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Spaaij, 2019), and innovation in SFD (Chawansky et al., 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2019). Among these important topics, we now turn our attention to three critical areas identified by scholars as salient for effective management of SFD organizations: debates of evidence, partnerships, and organizational capacity.

Debates of Evidence

SFD has developed in its academic discourse over the last two decades largely due to its social justice focus, exploration of potential program outcomes, and opportunities to investigate how management of these organizations may be different from that of other sport-related organizations (see Darnell et al., 2018; Schulenkorf et al., 2016; Seal & Sherry, 2018; Svensson & Woods, 2017). However, the field is certainly not without its critics within the areas of mainstream development and critical sociology of sport (Coalter, 2013; Darnell, 2012; Giulianotti et al., 2019). This criticism has largely been in response to the debate on evidence, which is necessary to counter evangelical rhetoric espoused by some policy makers and practitioners (Schulenkorf, 2017). The debates on evangelical rhetoric and evidence is critical to the current study as rigorous monitoring and evaluation of SFD programs are an important part of effective management of SFD organizations.

Scholars have been debating the way that evidence has been produced and utilized to demonstrate the possible effectiveness and success of SFD programs, which is necessary for SFD organizations to attract potential funders. In fact, evidence is influenced by the pedagogy guiding SFD programs (Nols et al., 2019). Coalter (2013) found that many SFD studies examined microlevel impact while claiming that impact had occurred at the mesolevel, without evidence to necessarily support this claim. Schulenkorf (2017) argued that there should be a clear distinction between short-term evaluation and longitudinal work, in that results of short-term evaluation are often provided as if they were obtained by a longer process of evaluation. More recently Giulianotti et al. (2019) argued that SFD research should engage with wider literatures and theories to advance the discussion on evidence, mainly by applying diverse epistemologies and methodologies that will create a more diverse, pluralistic, and innovative community of research practice in the SFD field.

These debates on evidence are closely related to strategies for managing SFD organizations in two ways. First, SFD organizations acknowledge the importance of evidence in demonstrating their program's efficacy. Second, many SFD organizations still lack sufficient capacity to monitor and evaluate their programs, consequently making it difficult to deliver and sustain evidence-based programs that could attract future collaborators (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Svensson & Loat, 2019). Essentially, more robust evidence can contribute to stronger planning and management of programs, which will improve SFD policy and practice and advance knowledge (The Barça Foundation & UNICEF, 2019).

Partnerships in SFD: Advantages and Challenges

Building and sustaining quality partnerships is characterized by effective management of engaged, dependable, and balanced relationships (Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019), and is one of the most important managerial strategies of sport organizations (Babiak & Thibault, 2008; Misener & Doherty, 2012). SFD organizations are not an exception in that effective interorganizational linkages are essential to be forward thinking (Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Shin, 2019). Literature has evidenced that most SFD organizations rely on partnerships with multiple public and private entities—governments (Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016), global corporations (Holmes et al., 2016), and high-performance sport organizations (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010)—to sustain and accomplish their missions (MacIntosh et al., 2016; Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016; Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Shin, 2019). The advantages SFD organizations gain from partnerships may include building organizational capacity, assuring positive program outcomes, developing sustainability, and conducting effective monitoring and evaluation (Casey et al., 2009).

Recognizing the challenges of building partnerships, Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, and Fusaro (2018) suggested that engaging in multiple partnerships could create a complicated environment that organizations struggle to navigate. Lindsey and Banda (2011) pointed out that SFD practitioners have had a lack of understanding of the public policy sector, which is necessary to initiate and develop partnerships. Growing competition is another concern. Many SFD organizations end up partnering with a few large international funders and rely heavily on them. As the

number of large funders is limited, SFD organizations have to compete for limited resources provided by these funders (Coalter, 2013; Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010). This competition has continuously been a challenge for both general nonprofit organizations and for those operating in the SFD field, where competition has increased for resources, while participants in programs have decreased (Nagabhushanam & Sridhar, 2010; Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Shin, 2019). Recent studies of SFD organizations linked partnerships between multiple entities to the concept of organizational hybridity (explained in detail in the next section) that may better enable SFD organizations to navigate the competitive partnership landscape (Raw et al., 2019; Svensson, 2017).

Power issues, particularly power imbalance between partners, is one of the major challenges within SFD partnerships (Darnell, 2012; Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010). Scholars in SFD have identified that power and control, often derived from financial resources, are distributed inequitably (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). A power imbalance may also emerge in partnerships between SFD organizations and researchers. Nicholls et al. (2010) argued that local SFD practitioners' knowledge is often subjugated by academics involved in research. In other cases, power imbalance in SFD partnerships involves "a high versus low-to-middle income dichotomy in which local organizations from the latter largely depend on agencies in high income countries for various resources." (Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018, p. 163). This power imbalance is a significant issue since it can negatively impact the development and implementation of programs.

Often, external financial partnerships encompass a dependent relationship in which SFD organizations from low- or middle-income regions partner with large funding agencies from high-income regions, and these have favored relatively narrow program evaluations that provide limited evidence—not holistically including micro-, meso-, and macro-levels—of individual or community impact (Jones et al., 2017; Lindsey & Banda, 2011; Nicholls & Giles, 2007). Recognizing these criticisms, academic partnerships have been an emerging focus of research, shedding light on the challenges perceived by evaluators and program implementers and strategies to overcome them (Burnett, 2008; Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016). As such, the importance of partnerships in SFD has been evidenced by many preceding studies, however, there is still a lack of awareness of this importance by nascent SFD organizations in great need of multilevel collaborations (Dixon & Svensson, 2019). Thus, building and sustaining advantageous partnerships is critical to being forward thinking and for the effective management of organizations in the SFD space.

Organizational Capacity of SFD Organizations

Developing organizational capacity has also recently emerged as a challenge in the area of SFD management. As available resources for SFD organizations are limited and competition among organizations has increased, enhancing organizational capacity is now more important for SFD practitioners in order to effectively manage their organizations by aligning organizational resources with outcomes the organization targets. However, while the capacity of SFD organizations has been a growing area of research, scholars have noted that SFD practitioners, similar to some practitioners in the broader nonprofit sector, often lack professional training and managerial skillsets necessary to effectively guide and sustain their organizations (Welty Peachey, Cohen, & Shin, 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2017). Still, perspectives of practitioners are needed to accurately examine their current understandings and potential strategies for enhancing organizational capacity.

Organizational capacity refers to the organization's ability to reach its planned objective or social mission through the use of its internal and external resources (Svensson, 2017; Svensson et al., 2018). Beyond a broad perspective on an organization's ability, organizational capacity highlights the dimensions of human resources, external relationships, financial capacity, organization and planning, and internal operations, all of which are critical to effective organizational management (Hall et al., 2003). Svensson and Hambrick (2016) emphasized the importance of understanding the context and environment in which SFD organizations operate, in that the uniqueness of nonprofit organizations may often produce organizational challenges. Svensson (2017) pointed out that "Today, a multitude of stakeholders are involved in SDP [SFD] efforts, including nonprofits, corporations, intergovernmental agencies, governments, and high-performance sport organizations, which has created increasingly complex realities" (p. 444).

Within these complex realities, SFD organizations have competed against each other for resources that will sustain them, including human resources and external funding. As such, many SFD organizations face challenges in building organizational capacity because they remain highly resource dependent, which is similar to other voluntary sport organizations (Dowling & Washington, 2017; MacIntosh et al., 2016; Svensson et al., 2017). Welty Peachey et al. (2017) linked these organizational challenges to the lack of business acumen of many SFD practitioners, who often possess a strong interest in social justice or passion for sport but have fewer skills in nonprofit management.

As the SFD field has been receiving more attention from

both academic and nonacademic communities, so too have the organizational processes and managerial dynamics of SFD organizations (Giulianotti, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Dixon and Svensson's (2019) recent study recognized the increasing complexity of institutional demands for SFD organizations, which can be managed through a process of organizational hybridity. Emergence of symbolic and/or assimilated SFD hybrid organizations was found to be important in Svensson's (2017) earlier study, in which these hybrids effectively advanced the organizations' purposes and helped them move forward as healthy organizations.

While there have been numerous calls for monitor and evaluation efforts in the SFD field (Coalter, 2007; 2010; Edwards, 2015), there is still a need to evaluate key reasons behind an organization's successes and failures. Organizational capacity research aims to assess an initiative's ability to achieve its goals and mission along with determining key factors that inhibit those potential successes (Cohen et al., 2019; Svensson et al., 2019). As human resources is one of the crucial dimensions of organizational capacity, SFD researchers have studied different aspects of this dimension including volunteers, managers, and leaders. Swierzy et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of volunteers and how "each organizational capacity dimension significantly impacts the decision to volunteer and the extent of volunteering" (p. 318). Svensson and Hambrick (2016) suggested that the influence of a knowledgeable and passionate volunteer base can be a key to organizational success. At the upper level, the capacity of SFD managers to leverage a set of capacities for SFD programs and organizations has been found to be crucial (Svensson, 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Another study by Kang and Svensson (2019) introduced the concept of shared leadership, which they found to be particularly important for SFD organizations where practitioners need to play multiple roles as a sport manager, a social worker, a project manager, an educator, and a mediator in order to be effective (Thorpe & Chawansky, 2017). According to Svensson et al. (2017), "the manner in which organizations implement SDP (SFD) programs can positively or negatively impact learning outcomes" (p. 10). As such, understanding organizational capacity contributes to the effectiveness of broader SFD management in that it informs what works, how it works, and how to improve SFD practices at an organizational level.

As evidenced above in the literature that is illustrative but not exhaustive of the current trends and issues in SFD, much of the earlier thinking on managerial strategies within SFD revolved around scholarship and research emanating from the academic perspective. Yet more recently, there have been continuing attempts to recognize practitioners' perceptions. Our study contributes to the growing body of literature on SFD practitioners' perceptions by providing opportunity for practitioners to further contribute to this dialogue and help shape future thinking and practice within the SFD space.

METHOD

In an effort to assess the perspectives of SFD practitioners, we engaged in an exploratory qualitative study that involved criterion based purposive sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Considering the nature of this data collection and its analysis, it is important to include the positionality of the authors to provide background on their perspectives. Each author is a full-time academic and has extensive experience in SFD research efforts and qualitative data collection. The second and third authors have both worked with the NGO industry as practitioners and academic collaborators (24 years and 14 years respectively), including several recent projects. Considering the prior experience and knowledge of the authors, the study was approached from a constructivist paradigm (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007) recognizing our background would influence our interpretation of the data. Specifically, our criterion-based purposeful sampling (Duan et al., 2015) aimed to collect data that could represent the global SFD field. Through SFD field recognized online platforms (Beyond Sport and SportandDev), we developed a short list of 60 diverse organizations based on three criteria: (a) the organization is currently active and viable, (b) the organizations represent diverse locations (e.g., low- to middle- and high-income nations) across all six continents, and (c) the organizations have variety in programming (e.g., type of sport employed, mission, targeted demographic). Emails were sent by the first author to key stakeholders at the 60 organizations (e.g., CEOs, top-level managers, and directors) inviting them to participate in a personal interview about their perspectives on advancing the field through effective management of their organizations. After two weeks, follow-up emails were sent to nonresponders. In total, 29 individuals representing 28 organizations volunteered to take part in this study, which entailed conducting semistructured Skype or phone interviews with the second and third authors in order to gather in-depth, robust data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two interviewees were working for the same organization as we had initially contacted one individual from that organization who did not respond, so we contacted another. However, the individual who did not respond later agreed to participate. Interviewees represented six continents and a wide range of organizations employing different sports and with varied missions. Table 1 details the 30 individuals.

Table 1. Names (Pseudonyms) of Study Participants, Job Role, Region, Years in SFD, and Mission of Organization

Pseudonym	Job Role	Region	Years in SFD	Mission of Organization
Andrea	International program manager	Colombia, South America	12	Offering programs in education and sports training for displaced children
Andrew	Director of cross cultures	Balkan region	20	Promoting social cohesion between people of different cultures
Annie	Vice president	North America	3	Inspiring girls using a fun, experience-based curriculum integrated with running
Chris	Founder	UK	6	Promoting emotional and behavioral change through football (soccer)
Cindy	Associate director	North America	6	Fusing sport and therapy to heal and strengthen at-risk youth
David	International director	South Africa	6	Utilizing sport for holistic community transformation and development of young leaders
Derrick	Executive director	Kenya	16	Using sports for positive social change through a community development organization
Jesus	Regional coordinator	Colombia, South America	3	Offering programs in education and sports training for displaced children
Jill	Executive director	International	17	Focusing on health, social, and soccer skills within an integrated educational curriculum
Jim	Cofounder	Thailand	3	Building community cohesion among the different refugee communities through soccer
Karen	Program manager	UK	2	Fostering physical activity and building skills through volunteering
Larry	President	International	10	Empowering young people to build a strong self-respect using basketball
Linda	Institutional relations manager	International	7	Helping disadvantaged youth through martial arts combined with education
Maribel	Director	Colombia	6	Enabling social transformation through sport for the construction of peace in the region
Marilyn	Program officer	Zambia, Africa	13	Empowering underserved communities through their active participation in sport
Mark	Managing director	Asia, Europe	10	Using soccer to help save the lives of children living at daily risk
Nate	Director & cofounder	South America, Africa, Thailand	13	Helping disadvantaged communities reach their full potential in sport, education, and health
Nina	Executive director	Kenya	3	Using football (soccer) to develop essential life skills of vulnerable young women
Paul	Executive director	Asia	4	Using football (soccer) to tackle the poor nutritional practices in Asia
Prima	Regional director—East	India	19	Developing local community cohesion through a curriculum of sporting activities
Randy	Executive director	US	18	Developing youth and community for a positive community culture
Sally	Director	China, India, Jordan, Nigeria, Zambia	7	Equipping adolescent girls to exercise their rights through sport
Sam	Director of operations	Sudan	5	Operating an all-refugee soccer club and youth soccer academy for displaced people in Darfur.
Sandra	Operations manager	Asia	3	Promoting global equal opportunity for disadvantaged and marginalized children
Sergio	Founder	Africa, South America, Caribbean	20	Building communities by constructing community sports facilities
Steven	Deputy department director	Israel	5	Developing and implementing innovative peacebuilding programs
Sven	Founder & executive director	Liberia	10	Using sports as a tool to reach at-risk youth through sustainable community development
Timothy	Executive director	Ecuador	7	Building self-reliance and a sense of community among at-risk youth in Ecuador
Tom	Executive director	International	9	Mobilizing activism of the outdoor sports community for positive climate action

An interview guide was developed to elicit interviewees' in-depth perspectives on advancing the field through effective management, which was drawn from the aforementioned literature on current trends (Schulenkorf, 2017; Schulenkorf et al., 2016), partnerships (Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018), organizational capacity (Cohen et al., 2019; Svensson, 2017; Dixon & Svensson, 2019), and evidence issues (Giulianotti et al., 2019; Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Spaaij, 2019). Sample questions included: "Can you reflect on your overall experience managing your respective initiative?", "What is your reflection on advancing the sport for development field and how does this relate to your perspective on the field for the next five to 10 years?", "What advice in terms of better managing sport for development organizations would you give to other individuals interested in engaging in sport for development work?" The sample size was deemed sufficient with the occurrence of data saturation when respondents began to repeat common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

All interviews were conducted over the phone or Skype, audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company, conducted in English, and lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. We employed an inductive, open coding process to allow for themes and ideas to emerge from the data (Merriam, 2002; Miles et al., 2014). Initially, the authors coded the same three transcripts individually. After debating their individual coding, the authors agreed on general themes to guide the remainder of the coding process that was conducted by the first author (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The initial themes were then collapsed into the broader categories that are represented in the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a final step, representative quotations were selected that best depicted the themes (Sandelowski, 1994). Dependability and credibility were enhanced by conducting member checks with interviewees (Schwandt, 2015). Multiple conversations took place among the authors to draw forth the results of the analysis and interpretations, with the discussion continuing until no discrepancies emerged. Interviewees reviewed their transcripts and the authors' interpretations through email invitations to do so, and they generally agreed with our interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

FINDINGS

Data were organized around the central research question focusing on practitioners' perspectives on advancing the SFD field through effective management of their organizations. Findings revealed that interviewees had various suggestions drawn from their work experiences: enhance sustainability, have passion, gain experience before action, engage in professional development, establish academic partnerships, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and optimize the use of online resources.

Enhance Sustainability

In order to engage in effective management, interviewees suggested that more organizations in the field need to strive to build and develop sustainability. They emphasized that maintaining and enhancing sustainability of the SFD field is important as they foresee the field continuing to expand. Being optimistic about the future of the field, interviewees recognized that as the field expands, it will be vitally important to make the field sustainable; that is, a focus on quantity and quality should go hand in hand. As interviewees believed that the SFD field will grow and increase in size and quantity of programs, they underscored that SFD practitioners should endeavor to sustain quality, which could translate into maintaining sustainable organizations and programs. For example, Chris, founder of a UK-based organization who has been working in the field for six years, argued, "I think it will only get bigger. I think it will get bigger as long as people maintain the quality."

Along these lines, interviewees mentioned that their initiatives as well as other SFD organizations have already begun to recognize the significance of building sustainability, with a collective aim to advance the field by focusing on program longevity and quality of programs and management. For instance, Marilyn, a program officer with 13 years of experience working for a Zambian organization serving local communities through sport, saw the emerging significance of maintaining sustainability among SFD organizations: "I'm seeing organizations really focusing on sustainability. How, for example, is our organization going to sustain its programs in the communities?" Sergio, founder of a multicontinent organization that has been building communities by constructing community sport facilities for 20 years, echoed this comment, particularly with regards to persistence in programing: "Sustainability is very important. Otherwise, you are giving something else for one day, but maybe for the next one it will be nothing." The need for sustainability was also mentioned by Andrea, an international program manager with 12 years of field experience with an organization based in Colombia: "Try to make it sustainable, something that is going to last a while." Finally, Jill, who has been working as an executive director for an international SFD organization for 17 years, perceived that obtaining financial independence or self-sufficiency is critical for managers to ensure the long-term sustainability of organizations: "If you can find out ways to sustain an organization that is what you need to do. Because that is really a challenge to maintain an organization based on philanthropy." In sum, sustainability was found to be closely related to managerial effectiveness, as evidenced by the interviewees' experiences.

Have Passion

To effectively manage organizations, study interviewees spoke about the importance of having passion for sport itself as well as for the field of SFD because the field is rife with challenging situations and pressure. Cindy, a six-year associate director of an organization based in North America, commented that SFD practitioners should expect to replace financial rewards with passion: "I would suggest to find a mission that you really believe in . . . make sure that you truly have a passion about your work because it is not all that financially rewarding." Jim, cofounder of an SFD organization in Thailand working with refugee communities, echoed Cindy's point to have strong passion, mentioning an extensive requirement of time and energy: "If you start something like this, you must have passion . . . because it takes a lot of time and energy." Nate, a director and a cofounder who has been working for an SFD organization in South America, Africa, and Thailand for 17 years, affirmed the need for passion: "Passion and energy definitely you need to have because if you are not passionate and you don't have energy or enthusiasm, I don't think you will make any business work." Reinforcing this call for passion, Jesus, a regional coordinator of a Colombia-based SFD organization, shared poignant advice he learned by working in South America with people in severe poverty:

> *This requires passion . . . and that poverty that you have to see, you have to impregnate yourself with it, you have to live it, see it, smell it. Because it doesn't smell good, it doesn't look good, and it's not pleasant to feel it.*

As shared by multiple interviewees, having passion was revealed to be a necessary baseline in SFD for effective management and working in communities, especially in communities facing difficulties. While passion alone was recognized as an insufficient pathway toward effective management and sustainability, it was emphasized as a crucial aspect of being an effective organization.

Gain Experience Before Action

Regardless of context, study interviewees perceived that being involved in SFD before starting an initiative or organization was critical to provide new practitioners a strong sense of how the field operates, which would allow them to be more effective in their management. Paul, an executive director of an organization using soccer to prevent health problems in Asia, recommended new practitioners obtain actual field experience through volunteering:

Get practically involved . . . and start volunteering and actually get hands on experience or go into an NGO and spend two, three months in a program on a voluntary basis, just to start to really get a good feel for it.

This advice was reiterated by Sven, who founded an organization in Liberia and has been working with at-risk youth for 10 years: "Go learn from them [practitioners] first, don't try to reinvent the wheel . . . if someone is doing it already, go learn from them or join them." Linda, an institutional relations manager of an international organization working with disadvantaged youth, further pointed to the need to communicate and build networks with other practitioners who are already working in the field:

Help make the movements that already exist stronger. There is a huge effort from organizations that are already consolidated to try to place sport for development as something important in the national agenda . . . not to try to reinvent the wheel, do not isolate from people and organizations that have already done work.

Engage in Professional Development

Interviewees suggested that SFD practitioners need to focus on leadership and human resource training for new and continuing staff and volunteers in order to manage their organizations effectively. Derrick, who has 16 years of field experience as an executive director of a Kenyan organization pursuing community development, shared how his organization contributes to the SFD field through training new leaders: "We do find ourselves [as a leader] because we have helped start several organizations . . . getting all these consultations, people calling in . . . that's happening and that's why we have the academy, the training."

Further, Steven, a deputy department director of an Israeli organization that develops and implements peacebuilding programs through sport, specified that SFD should target young leaders to make the field more sustainable: "We should focus more on the young leadership. Try to maintain this age group but do better and expand this layer throughout the different communities." Interviewees believed that expanding the field both vertically (younger and newer leadership) and horizontally (network among new leaders) could start with leadership and human resource training. Marilyn identified another group of potential new leaders within the field: "I'm looking to see more women empowered and more work empowering women, women getting into leadership positions, women able to bring out positive impact in their communities, being role models."

With regards to human resource training, Steven stressed the importance of in-house education of trainers (program managers/leaders) through continuous communication and development. He believed that quality training should be provided to achieve the goal of an organization as well as a specific program, which he described as "success," meaning a sustainable program and organization led by well-trained and committed staff:

The key is in training the trainers. Put a lot of energy in the trainers and you will see the impact. . . . Once you have the trainer with you and you all talk the same language and share the goals, understand the methodology the same, work together on a regular basis, that's the key for success.

Establish Academic Partnerships

From a broad perspective, all study interviewees agreed on the importance of general partnerships to better achieve their organizational missions and optimize managerial effectiveness. For example, David, an international director of a South African SFD organization with six years of field experience, said more opportunity would lead to better partnerships: "There will be much better understanding and much more authenticity about what can be done and what is happening. And much greater partnership between practitioners, academics, and other entities." We focus here on the intriguing aspect of academic partnerships. Half of the study interviewees specifically emphasized the need to develop and maintain academic partnerships to facilitate effectiveness. Derrick shared:

I think all is good to invite academics. They can be critical of course . . . but it is good that we are open to such views and such questioning because it helps you reflect on your own work. And helps you ask yourself, what am I doing or what are we doing. It's something that builds the organization.

Likewise, Marilyn reported that academic partnerships can provide practitioners an opportunity to fully reflect on their work objectively: "Bring in research people to do research and to have a second look at the project. It's very important that you have an independent view." Another strategy suggested was to expand academic partnerships by involving funders, as illustrated by Mark, a managing director with 10 years of experience working for an organization using soccer to help at-risk children in Asia and Europe:

There should be greater alignment between academics, practitioners, and funders about why research is important. . . . When donors go to these organizations, they should always involve research partners, because that's the only way you're going to see if the program is effective.

Paul suggested to engage with graduate students who are willing to do research with SFD organizations: "Welcome research opportunities, and especially for students, like doctorate students or master's students." Finally, Sandra, an operations manager of an Asian-based SFD organization, recognized the positive contribution that research partnerships can make to the field: "There are a lot of researchers out there that if brought together, could make a more cohesive global case."

Develop a Professional and Entrepreneurial Mindset

Interviewees also expressed a belief that it was important to develop a business mindset and hone in on social entrepreneurship to enhance managerial effectiveness. Jill indicated that organizational leaders and managers have to think from a managerial perspective, which may not align completely with an altruistic mindset: "There are nonaltruistic reasons here. We are looking for resources and money and that is always a driver of why you are looking."

Interviewees also advised SFD practitioners to develop social entrepreneurship and business skillsets that can help them manage their organizations more effectively. Nate commented: "A certain level of entrepreneurial spirit, I think, is important." Jill's perception echoed Nate's opinion and she further suggested a way of shifting challenges to an opportunity to build entrepreneurship: "Turn that [financing challenges] into a self-help development creative kind of entrepreneurship." Similarly, Mark strongly argued that SFD organizations should be operated and managed with a professional managerial mindset: "I just mean about running it as a business and having to accept professional standards and the opportunity to run a business and do good." Further, interviewees recognized the challenges and difficulties nonprofit organizations usually encounter in differentiating themselves. Tom, an executive director who has been working with an international organization to mobilize climate action to sustain outdoor sport, shared how his organization differentiates itself and discussed the business mindset which is needed:

We are more of a marketing agency than we are a nonprofit. We take people's money and create social movement with it. If I had been a real hardcore nonprofit guy at the beginning, we may have fallen into some of the typical habits of a non-profit.

Optimize Usage of Online Resources

Finally, in this era of technological advances, about two-thirds of interviewees emphasized the importance of using online platforms and resources to excel in the field and for effective management of organizations. Interviewees shared that online tools are beneficial to connect with other practitioners and organizations, especially those who are geographically distant. Sandra provided detailed advice on utilizing online platforms, including online communities:

It's very beneficial to know about these types of [online] connector organizations that exist in the world where you can really learn more about sport for development, because there are so many different sports being used. There are so many different countries and continents where it's being done, and in so many different ways.

Sally, a director of a multination organization working with adolescent girls to enhance their right to exercise, emphasized the benefits of using social media: "People want to share our social media, they will catalyze around energy, movement, enthusiasm to help the ideas evolve, and the field evolve, through transformational thinking, engaging stakeholders." Tom pointed out the importance of social media to connect with potential supporters of his organization: "We [practitioners] have to be really good at social media. . . . It is all about understanding your target—'how do these kids consume media and how do we connect with them on a really emotional level?'"

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of SFD practitioners on how SFD organizations can be more effectively managed for sustainability and meaningful impact. As highlighted in the introduction and literature review, the SFD field has rapidly advanced both in terms of practice and research. This study aimed to advance previous findings via capturing the perspectives of SFD practitioners to drive future investigations in this field. Considering the

majority of empirical case studies regarding SFD have focused on specific outcomes and impacts, the current effort allowing practitioners to reflect, provide feedback, and recommendations on advancing the field through effective management provides a new and important viewpoint on the field. The diverse characteristics of interviewees and their organizations allowed us to draw forth a holistic picture about SFD from practitioner insights.

It is interesting to note that there still exists a scholar-practitioner gap with regards to perceptions on the ways to advance the field through effective management. Scholars have generally taken a more critical lens and advocate for continued caution about claims made as to long-term impacts (Coalter, 2007; Darnell, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2016; Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Hill, 2019). In our study, however, practitioners were relatively positive about the continuing impact of both the field of SFD in general and programs in specific, with very few voices providing critical discourse and cautions. As such, many practitioners still espoused an evangelical approach about using sport as a developmental apparatus. This rhetoric has implications for the management of SFD, as potential funders and partners could be reluctant to fund or partner with SFD organizations who already assume impact will occur (Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018). Thus, practitioners and policy makers need to be very cautious in their assumptions about sport's power to achieve outcomes when developing, planning, and implementing policy and programs. However, we acknowledge that our interviewees may have shaped their dialogue as more positive because they thought it was what we, as researchers, wanted to hear.

Despite the positive perspective, interviewees clearly recognized the necessity to make the field more sustainable, which echoes previous scholarly discussion on organizational capacity and sustainability of SFD organizations (Schulenkorf, 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016. Scholars have noted that SFD organizations have had difficulties in building and sustaining organizational capacity, which is critical for organizational growth and expansion (Cohen et al., 2019; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Though, more recently, studies have found that diverse strategies of organizational capacity management have been utilized by SFD organizations, including but not limited to organizational hybridity based on multiorganizational collaboration, alternative organizational design, and organizational innovation (Adams et al., 2018; Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Dixon & Svensson, 2019; Raw et al., 2019; Svensson & Loat, 2019). But still, another recent study by Welty Peachey, Cohen, and Shin (2019) found that SFD practitioners had challenges in "scaling up" (i.e., expanding in quantity and quality of programs), which included funding difficulties and a general lack of business acumen among key leaders. An overly positive view on the power of sport and the necessity of expansion could be a result of practitioners' social justice and sport background lending itself to overly optimistic perspectives not necessarily grounded in the realities of nonprofit management and practice. Another interesting point is that while scholars have explored multiple aspects of organizational capacity and its potential positive influence on sustainability, such as human resources or organizational structure (Dixon & Svensson, 2019; Kang & Svensson, 2019; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016), interviewees in the present study mostly focused on financial capacity as a way to build sustainability within their organizations. Our findings show that practitioners perceived the concept of sustainability in a less complex way, compared to the more multifaceted conceptualization employed by academics. As many SFD organizations are still nascent and small in scale compared to mainstream development institutions that have been around decades longer, practitioners placed strong emphasis on sustaining financial capacity in order to facilitate longevity of their organizations and programs.

Interviewees highlighted that passion is an important asset to work in the field and manage SFD organizations; scholars, however, have cautioned that passion is not enough to effectively sustain these organizations (Welty Peachey et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2017). As a gap appears to exist between academic and practical spaces (LeCrom et al., 2019; Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Spaaij, 2019), it may be helpful to reflect on lived experiences. Practitioners are immersed in the field, and their lived experiences are constructed by talking to program participants and witnessing changed lives, which could lead to anecdotal claims about sport's power and role. Therefore, when practitioners discuss the success of SFD organizations, emphasis was put on the training of passionate and committed staff, while the term success is fluid in that it can mean sustainable programs, financially viable organizations, and/or both the organization's and the funder's goals being achieved. That said, SFD scholars have argued for a need to embrace diversified epistemological and methodological approaches to engage better with the lived experiences of SFD practitioners (Giulianotti et al., 2019; Hills et al., 2019). As stressed by Schaillée et al. (2019), being able to translate and convey knowledge from academia to practice should be an important consideration for future SFD research.

Importantly, and related to the above, practitioners realized the importance of, and advocated for, building and developing academic partnerships, which reinforces previous scholarship (Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016;

Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2018; Whitley et al., 2019). Specifically, our findings suggest practitioners are calling for more academic/research partnerships in order to measure and demonstrate the impact of programs to secure funding through involving critical, independent, and objective researchers in the evaluation process. These points echo Sanders and Keim's (2017) argument that the academic sector is well positioned to enhance objectivity and rigor. Related to the point discussed above on the theory-practice divide still existing in the SFD field, it is interesting to note that none of the interviewees in the current study discussed the need for basing their programming on robust logic models and theories of change in order to enhance effectiveness and sustainability. This is concerning and reinforces the need for better engaged and relevant theory-building in the SFD space where academics and practitioners work together in bottom-up approaches to designing logic models and theories of change (Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Hill, 2019). Building and maintaining academic partnerships may enable SFD practitioners to be more conversant with, and understand the need for, incorporating logic models and theories of change to manage their organizations more effectively toward sustainability. A more engaged collaboration between SFD academics and practitioners, and "more concerted efforts in establishing meaningful opportunities for engagement" (Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Hill, 2019, p. 10) will contribute to the initiation and development of mutually beneficial relationships bridging the academic-practitioner divide. However, it should also be noted that scholars involved in research collaborations with SFD organizations found difficulty in developing partnerships due to these organizations' limited funds (Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016) along with simply a lack of awareness or knowledge of the academic process and forming partnerships. From the practitioners' side, academic partnerships can help provide outcome data needed to achieve funding. However, scholars looking to partner with SFD organizations may expect these organizations to have already secured funding for evaluation purposes before being willing to engage with them due to the pressure scholars experience for obtaining grants and contracts in higher education.

Interviewees envisioned a professional and entrepreneurial mindset becoming more prominent within SFD and encouraged other practitioners to engage in these activities, highlighting SFD scholarship pointing toward the emergence of social entrepreneurship as an important skill set for practitioners (Cohen & Welty Peachey, 2015; Hayhurst, 2014; McSweeney, 2018). Moving focus beyond passion, a prominent motivator for SFD practitioners, to a more entrepreneurial mindset highlights necessary skills practitioners need to design and sustain successful SFD initiatives. Reflecting the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a trait for organizational innovation in the broader field of general development practice and research (Peredo & McLean, 2006), we found that the concept of social entrepreneurship was viewed as a requisite for SFD practitioners, due to increasing pressure from interorganizational relationships that has been placed on SFD organizations (Svensson & Seifried, 2017). Practitioners have felt a need to respond to a plurality of institutional demands, which might be addressed with development of a professional entrepreneurial mindset in the SFD managerial settings. This finding aligns with Ratten's (2012) earlier argument on the potential of sport entrepreneurs more generally: "Sports entrepreneurship often occurs due to contextual factors such as whether a business venture is located domestically or internationally. Sports entrepreneurs often operate in an environment with no predictability and risk cannot be easily calculated" (p. 8). With this being recognized, Cohen and Welty Peachey (2015) insisted, "The marriage of social entrepreneurship and sport has strong potential if harnessed by philanthropists driven to solve an existing problem" (p. 114).

However, we argue that there should be caution, as SFD practitioners' indiscriminate acceptance of social entrepreneurship might perpetuate neoliberal ideologies. According to Rivera-Santos et al. (2015), social entrepreneurship itself is a contemporary concept established on the optimism for organizational survival and sustainability in a neoliberal time in which we see blurred lines between for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors. Within SFD, these blurring lines are evidenced with Johann Koss, founder of Right to Play, who was awarded the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Special Citation award for social entrepreneurship in 2012, and Jürgen Griesbeck, CEO of Streetfootballworld, who was named Social Entrepreneur of the Year in 2011 by the World Economic Forum (McSweeney, 2018). Reid (2017) explained that the "positive description of social entrepreneurs as 'change agents' deflects from their position within neoliberal governance regimes which sees responsibility for social problems shift from the state to the 'power within.'" (p. 598). Thus, social entrepreneurship in SFD should be differentiated from commercial and public entrepreneurship. This could be done through placing greater emphasis on the "social" of social entrepreneurship and distinguishing the concept from economic entrepreneurship.

Consistent with recent work on SFD and technology (Hambrick & Svensson, 2015; Schulenkorf & Siefken,

2019; Svensson et al., 2015; Thorpe & Rinehart, 2013), strategic use of online tools and resources was suggested as a useful strategy for effective organizational management. Our findings particularly highlight the benefits of building networks in and outside of the SFD field. As technology allows multidirectional communication, online networking creates and increases offline networking and support (Hambrick & Svensson, 2015). One of our significant findings was that SFD practitioners and organizations use online tools and resources to supersede the boundaries of space. While this is not a unique finding within the field of sport management as many areas have highlighted the value of technology (e.g., marketing, event management, and sales), this has seemingly been a gap in the SFD literature. This field has a unique characteristic of going beyond the spatial and geographical boundaries as SFD as a movement was global in nature from its initiation. Effective use of technology, as suggested by our findings, will enable SFD organizations and practitioners to interact without being limited themselves within geographical limits and establish newer and effective interorganizational relationships. That is, use of technology can excel and enhance the process of organizational hybridity and/or alternative forms of organizational management. Considering the previously highlighted financial and human capacity issues (Kang & Svensson, 2019; Svensson et al. 2017), being able to utilize new technology and online mediums is crucial for many initiatives to address a wide range of needs ranging from participant and volunteer recruitment, to fundraising, and promoting one's initiative. The need to be connected to others in the field stimulated practitioners to optimize the use of online tools and resources. With limited resources to work on organizational promotion or networking, practitioners recognized social media as a useful strategy, as it is a tool that is already designed, structured, and built for users. Another interesting point on the use of technology is that interviewees advised new practitioners to use online platforms to educate themselves about SFD. Utilizing online tools for education was also suggested in Hambrick and Svensson's (2015) study, explaining that SFD organizations use social media to educate stakeholders. In the present study, SFD practitioners recommended diversifying the usage of technology, extending the linkage between education and online tools.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We recognize the following limitations that may have impacted the results of this study. First, most of our interviewees were practitioners from high-income countries, although some of them were operating their programs in low- or middle-income countries. There was the potential of bias from the interviewees and researchers who are also from high-income countries. Future research should strive to garner perspectives on advancing the field through effective management from practitioners indigenous to low- or middle-income countries. Second, our interviews were conducted before the closure of the UNOSDP in May 2017. The IOC now has more oversight of SFD efforts internationally (United Nations, 2017). Thus, we were not able to reflect practitioners' concerns and expectations about broader institutional governance issues and global legitimacy of the field that may have changed as a result of this closure. Future research can focus on the changing landscape of SFD after the UN office closure and how the IOC and existing and new SFD organizations network and collaborate. Specifically, future research should examine how the changing landscape of SFD will impact policy and the viability of funding going forward. Last, studies could be conducted with policy makers and funders/donors as to sustainability and effectiveness in the SFD space. This will further diversify the perspectives about SFD, as these important stakeholders may have different perspectives of, and priorities for, the SFD field from those of practitioners.

CONCLUSION

From a practical perspective, this study provides perspectives of SFD practitioners on how SFD organizations can be more effectively managed for sustainability and meaningful impact. We still see that many practitioners believe sport will ultimately do good. To mitigate evangelical rhetoric, practitioners should always be critical and reflexive about the ways in which SFD programs are designed, operated, monitored, and evaluated. Creating awareness, reaching out to SFD initiatives, and developing academic partnerships are vital for providing an objective, critical evaluation of programming, and to also engage in bottom-up design of logic models and theories of change, which are currently missing in SFD practitioners' perspectives on effective management (Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Hill, 2019). Sanders and Keim (2017) elucidated that academic partnerships are not limited to research partnerships but can be wider in scope to involve university teaching and learning. SFD organizations can benefit from developing comprehensive partnering relationships with academic institutions as well as individual researchers. In the main, practitioners and policy makers still need to be very cautious in setting policy and management strategies and be careful about assumptions that sport will cure all of society's ills.

Development of research partnerships should evolve simultaneously with leveraging funding sources. Practitioners can initiate a triad partnering structure of funder, researcher, and SFD organization. This is not a

mixture of unidirectional relationships but rather should be circulatory and connect all three stakeholder groups in a coherent and mutually beneficial manner that is sensitive to power issues. Nonprofit management and leadership training should be sought after by SFD practitioners and leadership development opportunities provided for staff and volunteers. Practitioners should be cautious about their motives and policies regarding social entrepreneurship, for as we outlined above, unselective or uncritical undertaking of social entrepreneurship strategies may reinforce a neoliberal ideology (McSweeney, 2018).

Our findings respond to Schulenkorf's (2017) call for reflection and criticality when addressing SFD management by adding the perspectives of SFD practitioners who provided us with their first-hand experiences. This study provides a holistic overview of SFD practitioners' suggestions on the effective management of SFD organizations. The current study also helps to bridge the theory-practice divide, which has always been an issue within SFD (Coalter, 2007). A recommendation for SFD scholars is to pay more attention to practitioners' voices and lived experiences, as well as to continue working with them in monitoring and evaluation and program design. These continued and prolonged engagements may help the SFD field move past the evangelical rhetoric that is still prevalent. Welty Peachey and Cohen (2016) noted that under the neoliberal influence in higher education, SFD scholars might have pursued high productivity by focusing on top-tier publications and obtaining major grants recognized only in academia, not necessarily on yielding value to practitioners. Therefore, it is incumbent on scholars to critically examine how the knowledge they produce is disseminated to the wider public. Active knowledge sharing between practitioners and academics will help the field be more reflexive, open to criticism, and synergistically and organically engage in knowledge sharing, all of which will enable SFD organizations to be managed more effectively toward sustainability.

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Original Research

Guiding qualitative inquiry in sport-for-development: The sport in development settings (SPIDS) research framework

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ABSTRACT

The burgeoning field of sport-for-development (SFD) is witnessing a steady increase in experience-related empirical investigations. To support academics—and in particular young and emerging scholars—with a rigorous framework for investigating social and cultural phenomena in different SFD contexts, we propose the process-oriented sport in development settings (SPIDS) research framework. SPIDS represents a guiding framework that advocates a qualitative approach to researching SFD projects in which multiple methods are combined for a holistic in-depth investigation. In this paper, we apply practical examples from the SFD field to the SPIDS framework and discuss its individual sections in a step-by-step manner. Specific focus is placed on aspects of reflection and reflexivity as distinctly important and underpinning aspects of qualitative SFD research.

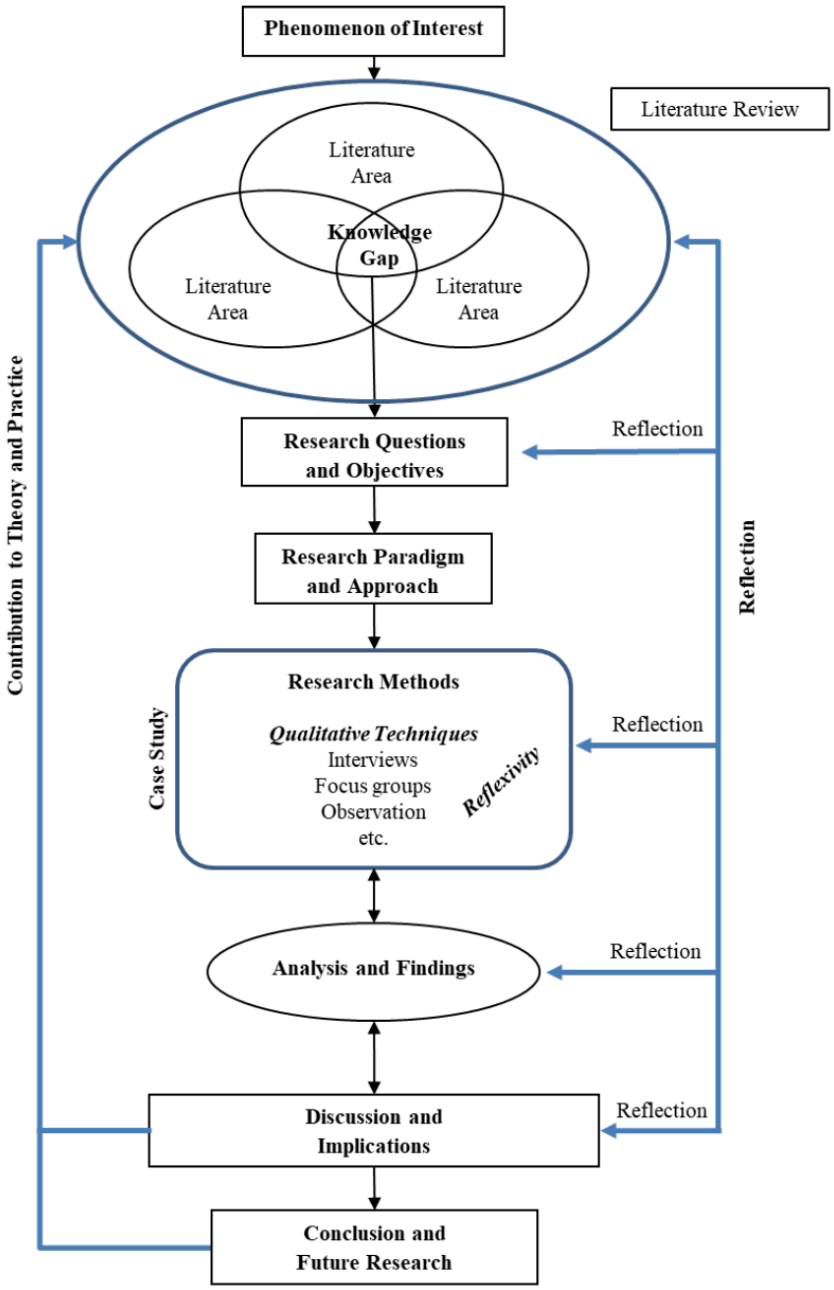
INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the area of sport-for-development (SFD) has received significant attention from practitioners and researchers around the world (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). SFD encompasses sport-based projects focused on supporting disadvantaged communities and their members in areas beyond sport itself, including health, education, social inclusion, gender equality, and socioeconomic development (Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Richards et al., 2013). The constant rise in organizations that use sport as a vehicle for development has been accompanied by academic studies that investigate, monitor, assess, or evaluate SFD projects. Scholars from diverse backgrounds including management, sociology, politics, anthropology, cultural studies, community development, health promotion, psychology, pedagogy, disability, and gender research utilize a variety of research approaches to address critical development issues (see, e.g., Darnell, 2012; Giulianotti, 2011a; Richards et al., 2014; Schulenkorf et al., 2014; Siefken et al., 2015). With universities and research institutions starting to incorporate sport (for) development subjects into their curricula, the number of researchers including higher degree research (HDR) students in the field of SFD has been increasing. As emerging scholars, HDR students comprise honors, master's, and PhD candidates who are designing their dissertations/theses around SFD projects and often embark on a journey that combines practical experiences with research.

With the diversity of SFD programs implemented and the great variety of local and international stakeholders involved in SFD, there is a need to provide scholars with guidance and support for their research endeavors. In particular, when SFD researchers access unknown territory and engage with local communities to conduct their investigations and assessments, they need to be well prepared. From an academic perspective, this requires scholars to be equipped

Keywords: sport for development; process-oriented; qualitative methods; research design; reflexivity

Figure 1. Sport in development settings (SPIDS) research framework



with a relevant and meaningful research design. In other words, scholars are expected to undergird their study with a rigorous research framework that builds on sound and engaging research methods—particularly if they conduct qualitative research in disadvantaged, marginalized, or otherwise fragile communities (Sherry et al., 2017; Sugden et al., 2019). These aspects are indeed critical for SFD as a field, as recent literature reviews and theoretical appraisals have hinted at concerns about academic rigor, including a lack of research quality and conceptual vagueness that may impact negatively on the credibility and reputation of the field (see Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019, Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet et al., 2019; Darnell et al., 2019; Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Hill, 2019). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to provide academics—and in particular young and emerging scholars—with a guiding methodological framework for conducting rigorous, empirically based qualitative SFD research.

THE SPORT IN DEVELOPMENT SETTINGS (SPIDS) FRAMEWORK

Research design provides scholars with the necessary guidance regarding the most appropriate procedures to employ when conducting a scientific study. It involves a clear focus on the purpose of a study and its methodology; it also outlines the information required to answer the research questions along with the strategies for obtaining

that information (LeCompte et al., 1993; Yin, 2014). In practice, emerging scholars often struggle to find a framework that will outline a clear pathway toward a coherent and rigorous inquiry (Perry, 1998/2002), a problem that is no different in the burgeoning field of SFD. In responding to this issue, we propose the sport in development settings (SPIDS) research framework (see Figure 1).

SPIDS represents a holistic and flexible research framework in which the content and focus of the investigation can be adjusted to suit the particular context of inquiry. The framework encourages self-reflection to enable a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon; indeed, reflection and reflexivity are distinctly important elements of the framework throughout all stages of the research process (see Sherry et al., 2017; Sugden et al., 2019; Willig, 2013). As such, aspects of reflection and reflexivity relate to the project itself, the research and engagement process, as well as the generation and interpretation of data as it is collected, analyzed, and discussed. With this in mind, in the following sections we discuss and reflect on the different stages of the SPIDS framework in relation to contemporary research in the area of SFD.

PHENOMENON OF INTEREST

Academics engage in research projects for a number of different reasons. In addition to extrinsic factors that may relate to institutional pressures or opportunistic approaches toward funding prospects, intrinsic factors include a genuine interest in a particular phenomenon that is relevant and meaningful to the researcher(s) and the target audience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Perry, 1998/2002). Generally, the introduction section of a paper or thesis sets the stage for the particular phenomenon or topic to be explored; it should be brief, describe the current status of the research related to the wider topic, and justify the proposed study (Martín, 2014; Singer & Hollander, 2009). The introduction follows the logic of an "inverted pyramid" by going from the general to the specific. In other words, after highlighting the wider problem to be addressed, the introduction leads to a narrowed focus of research, which can be used to explain and justify the specific topic under investigation. For example, within the wider area of community development, sport has gained significant research traction over the past 15 years (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). One particular subfield of what is today known as SFD is "sport in divided societies"—the intentional use of sport projects as vehicles for conflict resolution and peace building between disparate ethnic, cultural, or social communities (see, e.g. Giulianotti, 2001b; Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011; Sugden, 2006, 2010). As such, SFD in divided societies serves as a good example for a particular phenomenon of interest, and we will return to this specific topic as an illustrative example throughout this paper. It should be noted, however, that the SPIDS research framework can also be applied to any other focus area.

LITERATURE REVIEW, KNOWLEDGE GAP, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND OBJECTIVES

Literature reviews are an important way of building a strong theoretical foundation on which to base the research (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Singer & Hollander, 2009). Literature reviews demonstrate the author's thorough understanding of the field. As such, they provide an important orientation to readers regarding the current knowledge base of a particular topic and also indicate critical research gaps. In short, they facilitate the establishment of a theoretical frame and methodological focus, and they justify the reason for the proposed research study (Veal & Darcy, 2014). Drawing on parent disciplines and ensuing theoretical developments in the focus area, the literature review tests the research question against what is already known about the problem. In the context of a study on SFD in divided societies—the guiding topic used in this paper—literature could for example be combined from the areas of peace and conflict studies, community development, intergroup relations, social capital, identity theory, or project management. As indicated in the SPIDS framework, a comprehensive and critical review of the chosen literature would highlight the knowledge gap and lead to the development of research questions or objectives that can set the stage for subsequent investigations and analyses (see Perry, 1998/2002; Veal & Darcy, 2014).

A promising way of identifying the knowledge gap is by combining relevant literature areas from both the immediate and parent disciplines into a conceptual map or theoretical framework. This is particularly relevant for larger projects such as Honors or PhD theses. For example, Schulenkorf's (2009) dissertation on the role of sport events in contributing to social development between disparate communities in war-torn Sri Lanka identified a gap within the literature that required the incorporation of social identity theory, community participation, and intergroup relations theory. Similarly, Siefken's (2013) thesis on a health promotion initiative in the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu combined literature from cross-cultural health management, physical activity research, and social marketing into a framework that facilitated the examination of outcomes, opportunities, and challenges for sustained behavior change among urban Ni-Vanuatu women. Both these examples highlight that the specific research focus identified for a thesis requires an integration of theoretical

Table 1. Characteristics of positivist and interpretive modes of inquiry

Positivist Mode of Inquiry	Interpretive Mode of Inquiry
Assumptions: ▪ Social facts have an objective reality ▪ Variables can be identified and relationships measured	Assumptions: ▪ Reality is socially constructed ▪ Variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure
Research purposes: ▪ Generalizability ▪ Causal explanations ▪ Prediction	Research purposes: ▪ Contextualization ▪ Understanding ▪ Interpretation
Research approach: ▪ Begins with hypotheses and theory ▪ Uses formal instruments ▪ Experimental ▪ Deductive ▪ Component analysis ▪ Seeks the norm ▪ Reduces data to numerical indices ▪ Uses abstract language in write-up	Research approach: ▪ May result in hypotheses and theory ▪ Researcher as instrument ▪ Naturalistic ▪ Inductive ▪ Searches for patterns ▪ Seeks pluralism, complexity ▪ Minor use of numerical indices ▪ Descriptive write-up
Researcher role: • Passive involvement ▪ Objective portrayal ▪ Detachment	Researcher role: ▪ Personal involvement ▪ Empathic understanding ▪ Close connection and concern

Note. This table is adapted from Glesne (1999).

perspectives that determines the knowledge gap and allows for research to be conducted in a relevant and meaningful way.

The identified knowledge gap, and the researcher's perspective on the phenomenon of interest, will then influence the type and style of research questions or objectives. As will be discussed in the following section, qualitative research is underpinned by paradigms that aim to understand the "how" and "why" of a particular case. Hence, a qualitative SFD researcher will formulate research questions and objectives with adequate qualitative terminology, such as exploring, investigating, examining, analyzing, or identifying (instead of the quantitative options including measuring, testing, proofing etc.). To use the previous example of SFD in divided societies, possible research objectives are (a) to investigate the development of social relationships between or among participating communities, or (b) to examine the role of program managers in facilitating cross-cultural engagement.

RESEARCH PARADIGM AND APPROACH

To inform and guide research methodology, design, data collection, and analysis, researchers are required to consider how they see the world around them. As such, a philosophical research paradigm is required to undergird their scientific inquiry (Kuhn, 1970). Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) have previously argued that most research paradigms have an underlying epistemological basis that is either positivist or interpretive. In short, positivism assumes that, like objects in natural science, social phenomena can be explained objectively and factually (Glesne, 1999). In other words, positivist research accepts that reality is

objectively given and that it can be described by measurable properties that are independent of observers and their methods. In contrast, interpretivism proposes that everyone brings their own interpretations of the world or construction of the situation to the research. As such, there is no "single truth," and thus, the researcher must attempt to suspend prior cultural assumptions and be open to participants' attitudes and values (Elliott & Lukes, 2008). Interpretive research—with its origins in phenomenology—is based on the philosophy that reality is socially constructed and interpreted through language, consciousness, and shared meanings.

Table 1 presents a detailed comparison between the positivist and interpretive epistemology by (a) highlighting the differences in assumptions and purposes guiding the research, (b) clarifying the overall purpose of the research, (c) comparing the underlying approaches to scientific enquiry, and (d) clarifying the researcher's role within the process.

Research on the (social) experiences of participants and other stakeholders involved in SFD projects is often located within an interpretive epistemology informed by qualitative methods—an approach to research that represents an engagement between the researcher and participants focusing on what is unique and particular about the human, social, and cultural situation. This approach allows research participants to narrate their own experiences of life and decide for themselves what is significant and meaningful within the given context. As expert knowledge is often situated in local cultures and imbedded in interactional sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions. They often take an "inside view" from participants' perspectives to interpret their various inputs. Neuman (2013) concluded that an interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied, and such learning experiences can only be achieved through an in-depth, qualitative approach to research.

Seminal education scholar Elliot W. Eisner (1985) used the metaphor of a rose to explain the advantage of qualitative research in exploring the deeper meaning and value of a specific phenomenon. He stated, "To know a rose by its Latin name and yet to miss its fragrance is to miss much of the rose's meaning. Artistic approaches to research are very much interested in helping people experience that fragrance" (Eisner, 1985, p. 198). For Eisner, truth can only be achieved through flexibility, prioritizing the subjective over the objective, intuition over the rational, interpretation over measurement, and surprise over the predictable. As such, the qualitative researcher is seen very much like an artist at various stages in the research process, who—in line with Weber's concept of *Verstehen*—tries to establish an empathetic "understanding" to discover different realities and multiple truths that are suggested by numerous individuals.

In the context of SFD—and by inference in the related areas of sport, exercise, and health—qualitative research can help scholars to understand processes, programs, and communities in greater detail—something that is important for organizational learning and subsequent project design and delivery (e.g., Darnell, 2012; Spaaij, 2012; Spaaij et al., 2018). For example, honors, master's, and PhD candidates have used their dissertations and theses to explore the social, cultural, and health-related outcomes of SFD projects (Hoekman, 2013; McSweeney, 2017; Mwansa, 2010; Siefken, 2013). Recent investigations have also included studies on the management, capacity building, and institutional work around SFD initiatives, as well as the development of (sustainable) intergroup relations and intercommunity engagement on and off the sporting field (see, e.g., Hippold, 2009; McSweeney, 2017; Schulenkorf, 2009; Sugden, 2017; Wright, 2009). All of these studies show that when examining SFD projects in disadvantaged and/or divided social settings, the views, attitudes, and opinions are often divergent, conflicting, contested, and controversial. Hence, for a holistic picture of contemporary life to emerge, all perspectives need to be considered. The best way to do so is through rigorous qualitative research around a particular case.

THE CASE STUDY

Empirical work in SFD is often case-study based, which means that specific sport programs, projects, or events are thoroughly analyzed from a number of angles and perspectives (Cohen et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2018; Reis et al., 2016; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Whitley et al., 2013). Yin (2014) describes the case study as an empirical investigation of a phenomenon within its natural context, where contextual conditions are highly specific to the investigated phenomenon. A case study approach is therefore delimited by its subjective nature yet empowered by the same as it captures the uniqueness of a particular situation from an insider's perspective (Neuman, 2013). Based on his experiences in leisure research, McCormick (1996) outlined four key advantages of the case study approach. First, case studies allow the researcher "to see in contextualized action how theories . . . are enacted" (p. 367). Here, case studies presume that "social reality" is created through social interaction in particular contexts and histories (Patton, 2015; Stark & Torrance, 2005). A thick description of the case study and its specificities is therefore

an important element of a qualitative study. This means that in the context of a SFD thesis, the presentation of the case study context is of great significance; it may feature as a stand-alone chapter (e.g., Mwansa, 2010; Schulenkorf, 2009) or be integrated in the introduction and/or methodology section (e.g., Hoekman, 2013; Siefken, 2013; Wright, 2009).

Second, case study research offers multiple lines of action to the investigator, who can continually develop and refine parts of the research to deal with unexpected findings and changes in research objectives. Gall et al. (1996) noted that case studies have an "emergent" quality that larger quantitative studies do not possess. In line with the interpretive paradigm recommended to underpin qualitative research work, this suggests that themes or categories do not need to be fully predetermined but may arise from SFD fieldwork. As a consequence, new insights and "new knowledge" will be created.

Third, the case study allows a sense of time and history to develop. One assumption of the case study is that it is not possible to develop a deeper understanding by looking only at the contemporary situation (Stake, 2000; Stark & Torrance, 2005). This is of great importance in many SFD studies—particularly those that are focused on divided societies, as outlined above. These studies are often conducted in contexts where intergroup conflict or tensions between or among communities, social, or ethnic groups are prevalent. Tensions have often developed over a long period of time but are likely to play an important part in understanding contemporary hostilities. Testimony for this are SFD case studies conducted in Israel and Palestine (Sugden, 2006; Stidder & Haasner, 2007), Sri Lanka (Schulenkorf, 2010, 2013), Liberia (Armstrong, 2004), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Gasser & Levinsen, 2004), and across the Pacific Islands region (Sherry & Schulenkorf, 2016; Sugden et al., 2019) where peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts on the community level are strongly influenced by wider sociopolitical developments on the macrolevel.

Finally, the case study permits the confirmation/disconfirmation and the refinement of existing theory, as well as the extrapolation of key findings to other contexts (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 2000). While a simple generalization from case specific knowledge should not be undertaken (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Smith, 2018), researchers can carefully extrapolate information from the studies conducted and make modest forecasts on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar conditions (Golafshani, 2003; Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 2015). Smith (2018) goes even further by suggesting that specific types of generalizations including naturalistic generalization, transferability, analytical generalizability, and intersectional generalizability are in fact important aspects of qualitative research, and as such, they should be encouraged by the academic community. Overall, in qualitative SFD case study projects it seems indeed critical for scholars to find a balance between the two extremes of oversimplification and restrictiveness when proposing theoretical and practical implications from their case study findings. In other words, only if done sensibly can an extrapolation of findings be of significant benefit for the design and implementation of related SFD projects and research studies, as well as the development of knowledge in the SFD field overall.

It should also be acknowledged that case studies have distinct weaknesses and may not always be the best choice in qualitative research work. For instance, case studies have been accused of remaining largely descriptive without sufficiently addressing the aspect of transforming practice (Corcoran et al., 2004). Moreover, the complexity inherent in analysing a particular case is difficult to communicate by researchers given the limited scope provided in academic outlets. In other words, there often is too much data for an adequate analysis and representative (and transparent) account of findings. In such instances, larger qualitative studies such as integrative reviews or case syntheses across selected SFD settings may be more appropriate, especially if the focus of the study is less on the specific contextual detail but on wider lessons learned (see, e.g., Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom et al., 2019, Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Boutet et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the ability to investigate one particular case in significant detail has often provided a nice "frame" for HDR students in their dissertation work, and the significant number and high quality of publications with a case study approach confirms that if employed strategically, case studies will continue to have a meaningful future in SFD research.

RESEARCH METHODS

In the pursuit of achieving a deep understanding of the meaning of a so far partially known phenomenon, researchers have suggested collecting information from different positions and perspectives and combining more than one research method in one study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Neuman, 2013; Stake, 2000). There are a variety of qualitative data collection techniques available to researchers (see, e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Gratton & Jones, 2010; Veal & Darcy, 2014), and the choice of data gathering techniques is to a great extent influenced by the nature of the research problem and associated questions. In recent years, there have also been increasing calls for new

and innovative approaches to research across sociomanagerial aspects of sport (see Hoeber & Shaw, 2017), including SFD-related investigations that feature Indigenous methodologies, participant action research, autoethnographies, photo or video documentations, children's drawings, reflective journal pieces, or different forms of art, drama, and dance. For mere illustration purposes, in the SPIDS framework, we have opted for a combination of qualitative methods that have traditionally been used for SFD-related in-depth investigations (including theses and research projects): (a) focus group discussions, (b) observation *in situ*, and (c) semistructured interviews. This can, of course, be adjusted to meet the needs of any future studies.

The combination of these three methods allows for an analysis of a specific case from different yet complementing perspectives. This is particularly important for the investigation of SFD projects in divided societies, in which stakeholders often come from different geographical, social, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds; may have varying socioeconomic status; may possess and employ disparate levels of authority and power; and tend to be influenced by opposing political fractions of society on a regular basis (Darnell, 2012; Sugden, 2006, 2010). An additional advantage of triangulating different methods is the ability to link "involved" research (i.e., focus groups and interviews) with unobtrusive research (i.e., observations)—a combination that will add to a holistic in-depth understanding of a particular case (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A more detailed overview of the suggested methods and their implementation in an SFD context now follows.

Focus Groups

SFD projects are often staged in a local community context. For all researchers—and in particular those external to the community—it is important to get as close as possible to the real-life situations where people can discuss, formulate, and modify their expectations and experiences (Barbour & Schostak, 2005). Focus groups are one of the best methods to achieve this. Once convened, they can take a life of their own, which gives researchers the chance to step back and observe how individuals within groups react to the views, expressions, and ideas of others, and how people seek to defend or enforce their own views (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

Importantly, researchers need to secure a variety of voices during the focus group sampling process; moreover, during the actual discussions, all members need to be given equal opportunity to express their views. In her SFD study on a health promotion initiative for overweight and obese women in the South Pacific nation of Vanuatu, Siefken (2013) conducted three different focus groups that featured eight participants each. The first group contained international health experts and staff of the World Health Organization, which allowed for an external view on pressing health issues around noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. The second focus group consisted of local health workers and health promotion officers who engaged with local communities on a daily basis; they had the cultural knowhow around local health issues, customs, and processes. The third group included women from the local community who represented a wide spectrum of people young and old, married and not married, fit and unfit. The community group was able to contribute a local voice and discuss the causes and risk factors for NCDs in their particular social context. They also provided ideas and expectations for positive lifestyle change, including increased physical activity and a specific change of diet. Overall, the mix of perspectives resulted in a holistic investigation of health promotion activities, development opportunities, and challenges from which recommendations could be drawn.

Observation in Situ

Observation in situ is a classical approach to collecting data in the field. The method enables researchers to learn about the perspectives of people within the context of their natural setting and everyday life (della Porta & Keating, 2008). Observational data are used to describe settings, activities, people, and atmospheres from the perspective of the participants (Hoepfl, 1997; Jones & Somekh, 2005). Moreover, observation can add to a deeper understanding when combined with interviewing or focus group techniques, as both verbal and nonverbal cues as well as changes to behavior can be monitored, identified, and presented (Mackellar, 2010). Hoepfl (1997) argued that observation can have different formats, ranging from an "outside perspective" over a "passive presence" and "limited interaction" to "full participation." Whereas the first two strategies are mainly used to conduct unobtrusive, noninteracting research studies, the latter two focus on engaging with people and the phenomenon under investigation. Based on our experiences from SFD projects around the world, a *limited* interaction approach can be recommended. It restricts the researcher's power and influence and instead sees the communities in charge of project development. However, a (minor) involvement in the sport activities is of value as "becoming part of the group and immersed in its activities is the obvious way of studying the group" (Veal & Darcy, 2014, p. 263).

In an SFD context, the observation method may allow

researchers to see things that sporting participants or SFD administrators themselves are not aware of or that they are unwilling to discuss. This can for example relate to specific power dynamics in the field of SFD—something that becomes increasingly important when trying to understand relationships between international and local stakeholders in the context of "glocalized" SFD programs (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011; Sherry et al., 2015). People tend to express their attitudes and relationships by how often and how closely they engage or how they position themselves in a group. As such, social communication and (the development of) group cohesiveness can be read by noting how people are standing together, if they are looking relaxed or concerned, how they are interacting, if they are making eye contact, and so on. In Schulenkorf's (2009) sport for peace study in the ethnically divided Sri Lanka, observations with limited participation were conducted. Here, social interactions between Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim groups were observed at predetermined places, and photographs were taken every half hour throughout the entire SFD project. The strategic collection of observations and images allowed for the project's atmosphere to be captured over a period of time, focusing on both verbal and nonverbal communication on and off the field. As such, photographs assisted in the capturing of social settings, and they added visual proof to the researcher's observations and field notes. It should be remembered, however, that the use of media such as photo cameras and video equipment is not always suitable or culturally appropriate; as such, researchers are required to respect ethical standards in all their media endeavors.

Overall, engaging in observation often sounds much easier than it actually is. A significant amount of planning and regular data collection is required for observation to be relevant and meaningful. However, if observation around SFD projects is clearly structured and well organized, it can reveal important contextual and nonverbal information that focus group discussions or interview methods cannot provide.

Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews have previously been described as the most promising method to find out the "real" about contemporary cases and phenomena (Hoepfl, 1997). Beginning with a general list of themes to be discussed, this technique allows for flexibility in including additional open-ended questions for capturing new and unexpected issues and information as the research evolves (Barbour & Schostak, 2005). Hence, semistructured interviews permit the researcher to probe and explore. At the same time, they result in a systematic and comprehensive interviewing process within a limited time frame (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 2015).

In comparison to preconceived formats, semistructured interviews can reduce the researcher's dominance and power over the participant (Barbour & Schostak, 2005). Topics and questions are not strictly reinforced but allow for meaningful development. The researcher's role can primarily be described as listener within the conversation, which can lead to a reduction of interviewees' insecurities and suspicions (Patton, 2015). In the context of SFD investigations—particularly those conducted by Westerners in low- and middle-income countries—it is paramount that the researcher accepts the interviewee's culture as equally legitimate, which ensures that both can communicate across sociocultural boundaries (see Sugden et al., 2019). This seems obvious but is easier said than done, as it generally requires in-depth knowledge of the cultural context, history, and contemporary situation of a place, community, or society. Critical reflection and self-reflection is constantly required and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

When selecting interview partners for a research project, qualitative researchers apply *purposeful sampling* as their dominant strategy (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 2015; Stark & Torrance, 2005). Purposeful sampling implies that the researcher specifically chooses participants who are best suited to providing greater depth and understanding of the phenomenon under question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Neuman, 2013). In an SFD context, applying a purposeful sampling strategy ensures the integration of voices from *all* stakeholder groups that are impacted by the sport projects—both positively and negatively—which in turn contributes to a holistic and realistic picture of the case. For example, in his investigation of a SFD project for disadvantaged street kids in Vietnam, Hoekman (2013) described how purposeful sampling helped to select key interview partners including program organizers, the media, sponsors, key informants, and the wider community. After the first round of interviews, a *snowball sampling* strategy was employed to address further candidates. This approach uses the initial interview participants as an information source to provide suggestions or recommendations for other suitable interview partners with required attributes (Berg, 2004). In Hoekman's (2013) study, this also led to the integration of voices from children and parents who had previously left the SFD program, and it provided evidence of the specific reasons for their departure, which in turn became valuable information for SFD managers and implementers.

In the case of an SFD project in a divided society context, the combination of purposeful sampling and snowball

sampling is even more important given the tension-laden sociopolitical environment with which project organizers and researchers are faced. For example, in Sugden's (2006) research study with Jewish and Arab communities in Northern Israel, the importance of securing equal community representation was highlighted. This relates not only to the management and participation at the specific program but also to the research around the SFD initiative.

REFLECTION AND REFLEXIVITY

As "conscious learners" in unknown territory who seek to engage and see things from other people's perspectives, SFD researchers are required to be both reflective and reflexive. It is important to highlight the difference between the two terms here and explain how both reflection and reflexivity are important contributors to qualitative research. According to Bolton (2010), reflection is a state of mind and an ongoing constituent of practice. It may be described as "critically thinking about" something *after* an event has occurred. As such, reflection can enable scholars to learn from experience about themselves, their work, their research partners, and wider society and culture. Reflecting on actions may also provide strategies to illuminate new things and frame more appropriate research questions or approaches in the future. Bolton (2010) concludes that reflection challenges assumptions, ideologies, social and cultural biases, inequalities, and personal behaviors.

Reflexivity, by contrast, involves more immediate, dynamic, and continuing self-awareness in situ (introspection). Being personally reflexive means considering your own mental state, emotional being, thoughts, and motives *within* a specific context. As such, reflexivity is about finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices, and habitual actions (Bolton, 2010; Reid et al., 2018). For researchers who are striving to understand their often complex roles in relation to others, being reflexive means to examine, for example, how they are involved in creating social or professional structures counter to our own value (Dodgson, 2019). A good example here is the status and perception of researchers from high-income countries who are conducting work in low- and middle-income settings and the associated imbalance of power during interview and engagement processes (see, e.g., Darnell, 2012). Reflexivity also relates to becoming aware of the challenges and limits of one's knowledge and how people's behavior or practices might marginalize certain groups or exclude individuals (see, e.g., Dodgson, 2019; Reid et al., 2018). Overall, being reflexive means coming as close as possible to an awareness of the way the researcher is personally experienced and perceived by others in practice.

Researchers in international SFD settings are meant to be both reflexive and reflecting, particularly in regards to their own self-awareness and cultural background and their capacity for interpretation in foreign environments. According to Willig (2013), "personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research" (p. 10). Importantly, opportunities for reflexivity and reflection are heightened when the researcher can spend an extended period of time with local communities and in personal contact with the participants, activities, and operations of the case (Golafshani, 2003; Stake, 2000). As local knowledge and contextual experiences are considered key ingredients for successful SFD research, scholars are expected to familiarize themselves with a particular social setting and immerse themselves in new environments (Spaaij et al., 2018). However, "as this full immersion can be rather intense, the researcher is recommended to go in and out of the field at regular intervals in order to take a step back and reflect efficiently on the situation under study" (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 304). Reflection thus becomes a crucial element throughout the different stages of empirical SFD research. In short, the process of reflection is increasing the chances of identifying the most relevant, practical, and effective approaches to research and the creation of reciprocal engagement, rapport, and trust with communities and interviewees (see Sugden, 2017; Sugden et al., 2019; Spaaij et al., 2018).

The explicit inclusion of reflection as a key element sets the SPIDS framework apart from previous models or frameworks in the sport (for) development space. So far, different authors have used frameworks as support mechanisms to evaluate, measure, or assess the various impacts, outcomes, and legacies of sport and event projects (Bob & Kassens-Noor, 2012; Vierimaa et al., 2012), while others have used *ex ante* frameworks designed around youth programs aimed at health promotion and community empowerment (Laverack & Labonte, 2000; Petitpas et al., 2005). To date, however, none of these frameworks integrate the critical element of reflection—and reflexivity—into their design (for a notable exception see Sherry, 2013). The process-oriented SPIDS framework with its focus on research design addresses this current shortcoming by allowing for both a proactive and reflective approach to the different stages of SFD research.

The SPIDS framework allows us to illustrate the importance of reflection in an applied way. First, once the empirical investigation of any SFD research project has commenced, reflections on the theoretical and practical aspects of the chosen case study are critical. This includes a

(re-)visiting of the research questions, objectives, and methods, plus engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and research partners for a potential adjustment of chosen foci. For instance, in her study on the impacts of increased physical activity for female public servants in the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu, Siefken (2013), in close collaboration with local partners, reflected on the best approach for motivating more women to participate in the development program. After an initial engagement period in country and "local learning," she redesigned the project's practical components and related research techniques to allow for specific group-based approaches across all phases of the project. In short, her reflections led to the instalment of team-based physical activities and focus group discussions that were considered culturally more appropriate than individual exercise regimes and one-on-one interviews.

Similarly, Sugden (2017), in his research on sport and integration in Fiji realized that an in-depth approach toward local engagement was needed to understand fully the local sporting and civil society contexts. Engaging in what he labelled "short-term ethnography," his immersive in-country research journey was designed to gain in-depth local knowledge across the community, institutional, and decision-making levels to develop and reflect on a holistic impression of Fijian sport and society. For this, he designed a research strategy that included conducting an initial reconnaissance journey, spending several weeks living with Indigenous and Indian Fijian families, observing active training sessions with local rugby and football teams, and learning about the local ways of "Talanoa" knowledge sharing in-country. He also engaged with Fijian academics and Pasifika colleagues to critically reflect on his journey in an attempt to seek constant support and guidance during this process.

The two examples highlight that engagement, open-mindedness, and critical reflection are central ingredients for inclusive and well-designed SFD research. Importantly, reflection and reflexivity also remain critical components during the latter stages of research projects where findings are analyzed and outcomes are discussed. Here, "epistemological reflexivity encourages reflection upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that have been made during the course of the research, and to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings" (Willig, 2013, p. 11). In other words, as reflexive learners, researchers must take into consideration the sociocultural context for the interpretation of data and reflect on the specific circumstances that may have influenced the research environment. From a theoretical perspective, constant reflection on supporting research literature, including theories and past studies, will further shape the analysis and subsequent presentation of findings. Moreover, critical reflections on findings will increase the likelihood of a well-informed discussion section that may illicit practical and theoretical contributions and advancements in the area of SFD and beyond (see Welty Peachey, Schulenkorf, & Spaaij, 2019).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Once the qualitative investigation of an interpretative study is completed, the data analysis process begins; it aims at identifying and presenting findings in relation to the proposed research questions. There is a myriad of analysis approaches available to qualitative researchers (for a detailed overview, see Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), including new and innovative approaches specifically related to the field of sport management (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017). There are pros and cons to all these approaches, and careful deliberation—and reflection—are required to arrive at the most suitable choice for any specific study.

Some of the most common approaches in the qualitative world include narrative analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis (Veal & Darcy, 2014). In short, narrative analysis allows researchers to interpret texts and conversations in a storied form. This is done within the social context of the research and with the intention to understand and communicate the way people create meaning in their lives (Herman & Verwaeck, 2019). Meanwhile, content analysis studies a variety of artifacts or documents to systematically examine communication patterns. As such, the approach does not necessarily require the collection of empirical data and can thus remain more detached and objective (Krippendorff, 2004). Finally, thematic analysis can be described as an ongoing discovery of data—including from the previously mentioned interviews, focus groups and observations—in which the researcher examines and construes findings according to emerging themes. In Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) words, thematic analysis means "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145; see also Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). With this in mind and in line with the interpretive paradigm introduced earlier, authors read, reread, and carefully examine their qualitative data to identify and code emerging themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Coding describes the developing and refining of interpretations of data, which allows for data reduction, organization, and categorization into themes and subthemes (see Neuman, 2013). According to Willis (2006), coding can take on two main forms: open and axial

coding. Open coding is carried out first and involves assigning the initial set of open codes to a piece of text. Axial coding follows and involves the organization and rearrangement of the existing codes. As such, the process involves splitting codes into subcategories, identifying relationships between codes, or combining codes that are closely related (Neuman, 2013; Willis, 2006).

When research projects or theses/dissertations build on a significant amount of qualitative data, it is recommended to use a computer software program to support the data analysis process. For example, software packages such as ATLAS.ti, Leximancer, or NVivo can assist with the integrating, shaping, coding, and "understanding" of large quantities of qualitative data (Marshall, 2002; Veal & Darcy, 2014). Within NVivo, the processes of open and axial coding are reflected in the creation of free and tree nodes. While free nodes can be described as containers for storing data that "do not assume relationships with other concepts" (Bazeley & Richards, 2000, p. 25), tree nodes are those that allow for hierarchical organization into themes and subthemes. Tree nodes are therefore useful for axial coding and the reorganization of existing free nodes.

In the context of a fictional SFD research project designed to facilitate social engagement between disparate communities in a divided society, one of the research objectives could be linked to an investigation of social relationships between participating groups. In this case, the researcher may identify themes such as "trust," "engagement," or "tensions." As a next step, the researcher is encouraged to ascertain if themes can be categorized into subthemes that can allow for the creation of potential connections and hierarchies between/among them. Using the theme of "tensions," for instance, there may be subthemes of social tensions, managerial tensions, physical tensions, etc.

Once the data analysis and coding processes are completed, findings can be presented. While there are many different ways of presenting qualitative research findings, and one size does not fit all (Reay et al., 2019), it is fair to say that researchers who use dominant interviews and focus group techniques embed direct quotes from participants in the text with the attempt to "tell a story." Often, these quotes are structured and presented in line with the respective research questions and according to the established themes and subthemes. Here, researchers select those quotes that are poignant and/or most representative of the research findings. Moreover, they also make sure that different perspectives are heard (Anderson, 2010). As such, the findings are grounded in interviewees or respondents' contributions and their perceptions of reality. In this context, Anderson (2010) critically reminds us that research participants do not always state the truth. Instead, they may say what they think the interviewer wishes to hear. This aspect is certainly a factor in SFD research where all too often, evaluators are faced with scenarios where respondents provide answers in line with their funders' expectations or in support of predetermined program goals. In other words, in a competitive SFD funding environment there have been cases where inflated numbers are provided to satisfy particular participation targets, or impacts have been exaggerated to indicate wide-ranging program benefits (see Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014). A good qualitative researcher should therefore not only examine what people say but also consider how they talk about the subject being discussed, for example, the person's emotions, tone, nonverbal communication, and so on. Moreover, the analysis and presentation of nonverbal information obtained from observational research, photographs, videos, document analysis, and so on can provide important contextual evidence in an attempt to triangulate comments with alternative, perhaps less subjective data.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The discussion section is considered the heart of a thesis or paper; it serves the purpose of interpreting the research findings and explaining their meaning, implications, and distinct contribution to knowledge (Singer & Hollander, 2009). Examiners are likely to spend a significant amount of time reviewing this section, and hence, the researcher must discover springs of interest and creativity to make the discussion worthy of the rest of the paper/thesis. In other words, unless researchers can put their findings into a relevant form and context, tell a cohesive story, and explain why people should care, reviewers will struggle to be convinced. Supporting this claim, Phillips and Pugh (1987) noted that the discussion section "is the single most common reason for requiring students to resubmit their theses after first presentation" (p. 56).

In the discussion, researchers analyze their findings and put them into a broader scientific context. In relating back to the literature and research questions posed at the beginning of the inquiry, the discussion and implications therefore outline how the research has furthered the understanding of a certain research problem or how the insights gathered through qualitative analysis inform or challenge current understandings of certain phenomena. Against this background, the discussion section of a qualitative investigation explains why and how research findings are important. It also highlights the distinct implications and contributions to knowledge regarding theory, praxis, methodological approach, and/or practical application.

In the context of an SFD project in divided societies, the discussion could, for example, link back newly derived findings on relationship building to established literature or previous studies on intergroup relations and network analysis. Other areas for discussion could be the management of SFD projects and the roles that organizers take within the change process, as well as the leverage potential of SFD and potential benefits to the community at large. For example, Schulenkorf (2009) critically discussed the importance of international "change agents" within SFD projects in divided societies. Relating research findings back to theories of intergroup relations and community management, he highlighted the specific responsibilities of international organizations and aid workers in the development process. In particular, change agents are often required to initiate and support SFD projects, but at the same time, they have to be wary of the right time to pass on management control and power to local communities. As such, findings like these lead to important implications for SFD practitioners regarding the strategic planning and consultancy engagements around SFD projects, and they are also critical for our theoretical understanding of SFD as well as wider "mainstream" management and community participation literature.

In the SPIDS framework, these considerations are highlighted with two separate but interrelated feedback arrows: on the left hand side, there are the contributions to practice and theory that flow back from the study's discussion and conclusion to the previously identified knowledge gap; and on the right hand side, the two-way arrows highlight the procedural aspects of making sense of new findings and research implications, namely the requirement for researchers to constantly reflect on the different aspects of their overall research design and approach to generating knowledge.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The conclusion flows from the discussion and implications section and should stress the importance of the research and its findings; it should give the paper or thesis a sense of completeness and leave a final impression on the reader (Martín, 2014). An effective conclusion synthesizes (rather than summarizes) the content and gives the reader something to think about; as such, it may also include a call to action or recommendations for how to use findings in the real world. In contrast to the introduction, the conclusion goes from specific to general. This way, the "bigger picture" can be painted and key findings or takeaway messages can be linked back to the wider body of knowledge and the broader field of study presented at the beginning of the thesis/paper. For example, in their case study on a sport for coexistence project in Israel's Galilee region, Stidder and Haasner (2007) concluded that not sport per se, but rather specific physical education and orienteering activities—in conjunction with cultural off-pitch engagements—contributed to the development of positive social relationships between Jewish and Arab children. The authors suggested that in the context of SFD, adventurous outdoor education should become a critical part of project curricula. They further suggested that on a wider scale, outdoor education could also complement other peacebuilding initiatives that do not focus explicitly on sport as an active and supportive vehicle for development.

In addition to key takeaways, the conclusion section should also outline future research opportunities based on the findings and (de)limitations of the research undertaken. For example, a number of qualitative SFD projects have suggested more quantitative research to follow-up and/or test the initial explorations for verification purposes (see, e.g., Giulianotti, 2015; Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013; Schulenkorf, 2010). Other case studies have advocated for long-term investigations into the development of intercommunity relationships over time or an analysis that tracks past SFD participants that now contribute in different social roles in their communities (see Hoekman, 2013; Hoekman et al., 2019). Such follow-up studies would provide evidence (or otherwise) for the long-term value of SFD programming and suggest that investment into SFD can indeed lead to sustainable outcomes. Generally, the future research section is written to make other researchers think about new avenues of inquiry—it builds on the key messages identified and aims to stimulate other scholars to further develop and/or diversify existing research.

SUMMARY

Planning and conducting a major research project presents an exciting yet challenging task, particularly for young and emerging scholars such as HDR students and early-career researchers. In the area of SFD, many qualitative scholars go on a journey of exploration to better understand a particular phenomenon of interest. With the intention to support scholars on this journey, in this paper we have proposed and presented the SPIDS research framework that offers a process-oriented and flexible research instrument for examining sport-related development projects. We have argued that the SPIDS framework with its focus on engaged and reflective research can be used as a guiding tool for knowledge creation, and we have done so by providing an overview of what is required for each stage of the framework by drawing on practical examples from the field of SFD.

The element of reflection presents a distinctly important aspect of the SPIDS framework that should be considered during all stages of the research process. In short, reflection—as well as reflexivity—are particularly important in the field of SFD where researchers are often exposed to unfamiliar social settings with complex cultural expectations and local norms. We argue that without adequate reflection and the ability and willingness to be reflexive, any attempts to truly understand social processes especially in disadvantaged, marginalized, fragile, or divided societies are set up for failure. As a guiding support instrument, the SPIDS research framework may assist scholars prevent such negative outcomes and instead help to realize coherent and rigorous academic inquiry in sport-related disciplines. We hope that other academics, and in particular, young and emerging scholars, will benefit from using and/or developing the SPIDS framework on their journey toward conducting empirically based qualitative SFD research.

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Original Research

Conceptualizing participatory evaluation in sport for development: A researcher's perspective on processes and tensions from Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Participatory Evaluation (PE) has been adopted as a methodology in Sport for Development (SFD); however, there is a wide scope of conceptualizing *how* and *what* a PE research process may entail. Specifically, more nuance and insight are needed regarding how PE is a formidable research process between SFD researcher and SFD organizational staff. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the organic and planned methodological processes of conducting a PE. Hence, this study provides empirical insight into conducting a PE with an SFD project located in Vietnam. Drawing from my fieldwork, I detail the initiation of the PE, the process of establishing methods, data collection, data analysis, and results, and then comment on the researcher-to-practitioner tensions that arose. The data highlights that while participatory research (PE in this case) is increasing, there are processual considerations and limitations that need to be accounted for in the field. Inasmuch, this paper adds to pertinent methodological discussions by providing an in-depth account of PE research in SFD practice.

INTRODUCTION

Methodological negotiations and deliberations continue to be present and central to considerations for ways forward within Sport for Development (SFD) contexts (Darnell et al., 2016). SFD scholars acknowledge both the need for more descriptive and empirical based stories of SFD research (Welty Peachey et al., 2019) and the nuances of participatory based research (Hayhurst et al., 2015; Spaaij et al., 2018; Reis et al., 2015). Yet, not many have provided insights into their experiences about the complexities of attempting participatory research in SFD (see Spaaij et al., 2018). The purpose of this paper is to add to this ongoing methodological discussion in SFD.

Building on the work of Halsall and Forneris (2016) who conducted a participatory evaluation (PE) with a Right to Play program and Oatley and Harris's (2020) depiction of stakeholder experiences of PE, this paper details *what* a PE research project may entail and *how* it may be a formidable collaborative research approach in SFD. Traditionally, participatory evaluation, like other participatory research, is usually inclusive of primary beneficiaries of a particular research setting (Cousins, 1996). However, to unpack collaborative research efforts between SFD researchers and SFD practitioners, this project centered PE from an organizational perspective. Empirical insight into the methodological process of conducting a PE with SFD project staff members in Vietnam highlights the triumphs, difficulties, and tensions of such an endeavor. Notably, the nuances of breaking down the researcher-researched power dynamics, where SFD organizational stakeholders are integrally involved in the research process from beginning to end are detailed.

Keywords: participatory evaluation; sport for development; research process; methods; Vietnam

Herein, writing this paper follows a moral ethics founded in participatory research broadly whereby researchers ought to share stories of the research to stimulate the senses and depict realities that occurred (Green et al., 1995; Frisby et al.,1997; Simpson, 2007). Importantly, to conform to a moral ethics of writing about participatory research (Frisby et al., 1997; Greenwood et al., 1993), I write an earnest description of what it looks like to do participatory research with an SFD project.

The remainder of this paper proceeds in four parts. First, I outline PE as an approach to research, summarizing the definition, processes, and benefits of this form of participatory research. Second, I contextualize the methodological background by focusing on discussions and studies that have implemented PE in previous SFD literature. Third, PE is conceptualized through my own experiences in Vietnam highlighting how and why PE is a useful, potentially impactful, and insightful approach to SFD research. Finally, I conclude with the implications of this methodology on SFD research and suggesting ways forward for this methodology.

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Here, I discuss PE as a methodological approach that has been used to examine SFD practices. PE is a research approach within applied social science research in which various organizational stakeholders and outside researchers act in a concerted effort to share evaluation responsibilities in pursuit of both understanding and improving what is being studied (Cousins, 1996; Cousins & Earl, 1992; Fawcett et al., 2003). As a methodology, PE transforms power relations by paying attention to researcher dynamics in which ownership, agency, and ability are afforded to organizational stakeholders or local beneficiaries involved in the research (Cousins & Whitmore, 1996; King et al., 2007). Cousins and Whitmore (1996) emphasize that from an epistemological nature that the research knowledge and evaluation data are valid only when informed by practitioner perspectives. Similarly, King (2005) has stated that

> *participatory evaluation is an overarching term for any evaluation approach that involves program staff or participants actively in decision making and other activities related to the planning and implementation of evaluation activities. (p. 291)*

Thus, PE can be suitable for research with SFD projects. Suarez-Balcazar and Harper (2003) state that PE is rooted in participatory action research (PAR), in which there is the active participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process and the shared power of critical decisions. To distinguish the different research approaches between PE and PAR that have been conducted previously in SFD, Cousins and Earl (1996) emphasize that PAR is normative and ideological in form and function, hence PAR can be abstract and loose in developing the research project (Minkler, 2000). PE, on the other hand, is formative to the development of the research project. There is a special focus on the development of participants in the research process and improvement of the organization. Thus, PAR as an umbrella concept to participatory research aims to create inclusive spaces where participants draw from their experiences to guide and inform research and present questions that they want to address in order to enact positive change (Kidd & Kral, 2005; McTaggart, 1994; Tandon, 1981). PE, however, assesses an organization's effectiveness and discovers ways in which the organization can be improved (Cousins & Whitmore, 1996). For PE to take shape in SFD, processes should be inclusive, ranging from stakeholders delivering programs to stakeholders on the receiving end.

Process of Participatory Evaluation

Fawcett et al. (2003) describe the PE process as one in which those doing the work are aiming to understand and, most importantly, improve, a certain area of concern or challenge. The involvement of stakeholders such as staff or participants of a respected organization requires their participation in creating evaluation questions, designing the methods, participating in data collection, and reporting the findings (Daigeneault & Jacob, 2009). Since the organization (i.e., SFD project) itself has a legitimate stake in the research, to discover organizational improvements its members are deeply involved. There are five requirements that researchers and partner organizations should be aware of when conducting PE (Cousins & Earl, 1992):

1. An evaluation must be recognized as important by the organization.

2. The organization must have the time and resources (financial and personnel to carry out an evaluation).

3. The organization ought to commit to learning about itself in the research process to engender its improvement.

4. PE activities must be motivated by program beneficiaries, local partners, or an organization's staff members.

5. Appropriate training must be given to people who may not have the knowledge to carry out research.

Researchers and organizations that use PE intentionally involve different groups of people as participants in order to capture their experiences and knowledge. As a result, participants in PE differ in terms of demographics, positions, and responsibilities. Of course, levels of involvement and how people are involved in PE varies across populations (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Cousins & Whitmore, 1996). Particularly, it needs to be noted that PE between organizations differs from a PE conducted with program beneficiaries and this may depend on the problem being addressed (USAID, 2011). For example, if the aim is to uncover what hinders program implementation, then organizational staff may be involved. On the other hand, if the objective is to determine a program's impact on local communities, then beneficiaries may be the preferred participants. Nonetheless, roles may vary, and thus participation fluxes through phases of a PE.

In the context of SFD, determining who gets to participate in a PE and why may conjure up a conundrum laden with complexities of power, privilege, and voice (Coalter, 2007; Levermore, 2011 Kay, 2012; Schulenkorf et al., 2013). Stakeholders' interests vary (Hartman & Kwauk, 2011; Lindsey & Jeanes, 2014, and the level of involvement of stakeholders may be divergent. It is important, then, to recognize that PE goals and outcomes are not synonymous among all actors, since participants may want to improve programming while organizational staff may be motivated to obtain more funding (Cousins & Whitmore, 1996; Fawcett et al., 2003; King, 2005). This may result in conflicting and inequitable moments of participation. In this paper, the PE was between myself and the organizational stakeholders of an SFD project in Vietnam, particularly staff and government authorities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several scholars have acknowledged and applied a PE methodology to SFD research (see Halsall & Forneris, 2016; Harris, 2018; Oatley and Harris, 2020; Welty Peachey and Burton, 2017). Welty Peachey and Burton (2017) acknowledge the potential application of PE to SFD stating that PE may offer critical stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the process and thus improve the quality of any evaluation. For example, Halsall and Forneris (2016) provide a compelling depiction of PE in a paper detailing their work with indigenous youth leaders from a Right to Play program. Utilizing photovoice methods, their PE provided results that highlight youth participants' thoughts on experiences, successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement regarding a youth-led community event. Of particular importance was that Halsall and Forneris (2016) facilitated a space for youth leaders to engage in leadership roles and develop research skills, such as being involved in determining the focus on their PE.

Similarly, Harris (2018) showcases a PE in which training was provided to SFD program staff in the United Kingdom to conduct their evaluations. In doing so, Harris's participants developed knowledge and experience to engage in specific research projects. Oatley and Harris (2020) shared that due to the divergent experiences and knowledge of the stakeholders (e.g., founders, coaches, and young people), a PE design needed to be flexible where levels of involvement differed. The researchers needed to create bonds with people willing to be involved in the research and, importantly, to be more sympathetic to participants' disagreements and knowledge. PE as shown by Hallsall and Forneris (2016) and Harris (2018), can be a useful methodology to explore impacts of SFD projects while also providing participants opportunities to develop and showcase skills. However, although Oatley and Harris (2020) provide a vivid depiction of PE experiences, they state "there is a lack of research on, and application of, PE in practice within SFD programmes" (p. 20). That said, further exploration and critique of PE across varying SFD programs is needed to capture insights and understandings to actualize PE within SFD.

There are recommendations to improve and conduct effective evaluations in SFD. For example, Welty Peachey and Burton (2017 advocate for engaging in long-term assessments. Complementing this notion, Halsall and Forneris (2016) state that their PE would have benefitted from a longitudinal time frame because of their use of photovoice methodology. Moreover, considering that Halsall and Forneris (2016) conducted a PE with the specific program Right to Play, it is unsure if these findings informed Right to Play as a major international SFD organization broadly. To extend PE discussion in SFD, it will be informative to see how PE results may inform SFD project practice. Given the nature of analysis, whether it is at the organizational level or local beneficiaries' level, different methods are utilized in PE (Cousins & Earl, 1992; USAID, 2011); therefore, there is *no one way* to conduct a PE. PE research in SFD has provided rich descriptions focused on local beneficiaries (Halsall & Forneris, 2016) and organizational stakeholders' experiences (Harris, 2018; Oatley & Harris, 2020).

Further attention to various aspects of PE that provide empirical guidance on how PE may enhance SFD practices, programs, or activities is needed. A concerted conversation about the PE process regarding how PE materializes and the intricacies of deciding the research purpose, methods, and

overall experience is needed. In particular, Halsall and Forneris (2016) describe that they reached out to youth program leaders and community leaders of a specific Right to Play program to conduct a PE. Comparably, it would be interesting to explore how PE derives when an SFD organization proposes a project to an academic about conducting a PE and in doing so holds substantial expertise or authority in the process. It is thus important to continue discussions of PE, as well as other forms of participatory research, to advance and learn best practices of this methodology for SFD practice (Spaaij et al., 2018; Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016).

Accompanying this notion, rarely has SFD research written in depth about the actual *processes* of researching with people from the research setting (Darnell, 2014; Spaaij et al., 2018; Reis et al., 2015; Mwaanga & Prince, 2016). Welty Peachey and Cohen (2016) call for more first-hand accounts of barriers, challenges, and successes of research partnerships between SFD scholars and organizations. In doing so, Spaaij et al. (2018) state that experiences detailing collaboration between researchers and SFD organizations can help make participatory research more common and effective in SFD research. What I offer here is an account of participatory research inclusive of the successes and challenges so that others can learn from my experience and proceed with a more inclusive and positive participatory research agenda in SFD. By doing so I add to the recommendation of Nicholls, Giles, and Sethnna (2010) about participatory research in SFD: "we would contend that what is needed is not more research, but better research" (p. 260).

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION WITHIN SFD: A CASE STUDY OF FOOTBALL FOR ALL IN VIETNAM

Much like Puma et al. (2009) and Sanchez et al. (2010) who depict the promising aspects and shortcomings of PE community-based projects more broadly, attention is needed to the diverse application of PE. As the paper unfolds, focus is centered on the initiation of the PE, the process of establishing methods, data collection, data analysis, and results, and then finishing with a comment on tensions. Spaaij et al. (2018) note that participatory research may be challenging for junior scholars (i.e., Ph.D. students) due to time, in addition to financial and logistical constraints. With that in mind, this paper utilizes experiences in a PE research project undertaken for my Ph.D. in 2016-2017 to understand better how to implement this methodology with an SFD organization. Ultimately, future researchers can learn from my inexperience, mistakes, and insights to conduct better PE with SFD stakeholders.

Background of Football for All in Vietnam

The PE centered on Football for All in Vietnam (FFAV), a football (soccer)-based SFD project based in Huế City, Thừa Thiên Huế province, Vietnam (Thừa Thiên Huế Province has nine districts). FFAV was originally established through an agreement that was initiated by Norwegian authorities between the Football Association of Norway (NFF) and the Vietnam Football Federation (VFF) (Football for All in Vietnam, 2018). The vision of FFAV is to enable children to play football and experience life-skills education through the development of grassroots football programs across Vietnam (Football for All in Vietnam, 2018). To achieve this vision, FFAV seeks to educate parents, volunteers, and teachers and to empower local communities to create sustainable grassroots football structures (fieldnotes, December 2016).

In May 2016, a decision by NFF changed the entire landscape of FFAV. NFF, along with other Norwegian funders, implemented an exit process that would eventually cease all funding and logistical support to FFAV after December 31, 2018 (fieldnotes, August 2016). By way of this decision, leadership and decision-making processes veered from Norway to Vietnamese employees of FFAV. Ultimately, the result of the handover process was for FFAV as an SFD project to relinquish responsibility of all programs and activities to Vietnamese partners and communities by the end of 2018. Thus, in May 2016, FFAV shifted the focus of creating and implementing activities to how they can support and strengthen local capacities to continue activities. This plan provided that, from 2016 to 2018, FFAV would do everything in the project's capacity to equip government partners and local communities in continuing activities. Hence, the PE's primary purpose was to determine the appropriate steps in the remaining two years (2016-2018) of funding support to provide the tools and resources for sustainability in the local communities across the Thừa Thiên Huế province. Under the impression that activities in the communities would cease without funding from the local communities, FFAV decided an evaluation was necessary to gather the opinions of local communities on how best to continue activities without FFAV support. The hope was that the PE would result in actionable results/next steps.

This specific PE was about the handing off of activities to local partners, how that transition would go, and the new stakeholders' thoughts on how this would continue. The provincial Department of Education and Training (DoET) and the district-level Sub-Department of Education and

Training (Sub-DoET) were identified as authorities that would assist local communities continue activities. The goal was that, once FFAV dissolved as an SFD project and all staff went their separate ways, local communities across Thừa Thiên Huế could continue activities with their own resources and possible support from the DoET and the respected Sub-DoET. Notably, the purpose of the PE was not merely to gather information that would lead to funding but rather what skills and resources did the local communities have and would need to develop to continue FFAV activities.

Ethical Approval and Consent

Three layers of consent were needed to conduct academic research with FFAV and in Vietnam. First, with a letter of support from NFF and FFAV, ethics approval was granted by the Ethics Review Board (ERB) of University of Toronto. Support from FFAV was provided beginning in summer 2015 when I first visited the project in Vietnam to discuss the possibility of moving to Vietnam to conduct dissertation research. Second, formal consent was given by FFAV after confirmation that my dissertation proposal was approved allowing me to travel to Vietnam during my Ph.D. The vice-director notified each staff member of FFAV of my arrival and that I would be researching as a volunteer. In turn, FFAV staff consent was enlisted by the vice-director, as we would be working together in various capacities. Consequently, FFAV staff also acted as gatekeepers to local communities (see Collison et al., 2016) due to their longstanding relationships with people from the province. Third, because permission to undertake social science fieldwork in Vietnam needs governmental authorization (Bonnin 2010; Turner, 2010), formal documentation was submitted to the Vietnamese Consulate resulting in a work visa being granted. Formally, I registered with the local Thừa Thiên Huế Department of Foreign Affairs and police force in order to visit local communities.

Questions regarding my research position and power certainly warrant discussion. I must disclose that my own historical and cultural background is founded in the land of my ancestors, Vietnam. I am a Vietnamese person born in America to parents who immigrated after America's war in Vietnam. Plummer (2001) states that conducting ethical research is based on making decisions in different situations and drawing from culture and history, and it is not a pattern of just following the rules. As someone with historical, cultural, and social connections to Vietnam, I was attentive to the hierarchical structure embedded in society. Thus, I navigated my position based on age, status, and experience. For example, while I was an academic researcher from North America, I was conscious that I was not an expert of Vietnamese life nor how research is conducted in Vietnam (see Dao, 2020 for more insight). In recognizing this, I constantly conversed with the power and privileges that I had as a researcher and outsider in the research setting (Frisby et al.,2005). Donnelly (2007), Frisby et al. (2005), and Plummer (2001) all state that researchers who contemplate their power do so by having a greater social and self-awareness of the research process, especially in communities and in relationships with participants.

The ability to engage and be open with my position in Vietnam as a person and researcher possibly created an inclusive research agenda in SFD research (Schulenkorf et al., 2020). Being aware of my position guided me in a participatory model toward ethics. I felt a social responsibility to acknowledge that my experiences differed from FFAV and to create an atmosphere for their knowledge to be represented honestly (see Manzo & Brightbill, 2007). Hence, throughout the research process, I made sure to be open, honest, and straightforward about my intentions with FFAV to establish research openly and in line with the cultural values.

FFAV Staff

All but one of the Vietnamese staff members were *người Huế* (a person from Huế) and most came from each of the nine districts that make up the province. Many have faced or experience the same social conditions that local FFAV program beneficiaries encounter everyday (e.g., living in rural districts or encountering gendered customs). Additionally, in Vietnamese culture, connection to one's ancestral land is important (Lam, 2005), and there is a collective identity that binds people together and communal values that inspire people to be loyal to the place of their birth (King, 2005; Nguyen, 2016; Raffin, 2005). That said, one FFAV staff member expressed that working for FFAV was an avenue to give back to the province in which he was raised. Another staff member raised in A Lưới District (rural district bordering Laos) applied to work for FFAV because she saw how the project was creating spaces for young girls to play football. FFAV staff members' commitment and devotion to their province reinforced their determination to assist local communities in continuing activities.

To depict the PE in this paper, all FFAV staff have been provided a pseudonym in alignment with Vietnamese respect regarding seniority and order. See table 1 for a complete list of pseudonyms and demographics of FFAV staff.

Table 1. FFAV staff demographics

Pseudonym	Title/position	Sex	Approx. age	Home nation	Home province
Ong thầy	NFF special advisor	M	Early 60s	Norway	N/A
Anh Hai	Director	M	Early 40s	Vietnam	Bắc Giang
Chi Hai	Vice-director	F	Early 40s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Anh Ba	Technical (grassroots football) director	M	Mid 40s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi Ba	Program (life skills) director	F	Mid 30s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi bốn	Communications & marking director	F	Early 30s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi Tu	Human resources director	F	Late 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi năm	Financial/accounting director	F	Late 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Anh sáu	Technical intern	M	Mid 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Em bốn	Technical intern	F	Early 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi sáu	Program officer	F	Mid 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Anh bảy	Program intern	M	Late 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Em Ba	Marketing intern	F	Early 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Em năm	Marking intern	M	Early 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Chi bảy	Human resources assistant	F	Late 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Em Hai	Human resources intern	F	Early 20s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế
Co Ha	Provincial advisor	F	Mid 60s	Vietnam	Thừa Thiên Huế

Research Process: Initiating the PE

In my preparation to conduct research with FFAV, there was no intention to assess the project. However, after my first visit to FFAV in July 2015, the landscape of FFAV dramatically shifted. Hence, in planning to move to Thừa Thiên Huế and conduct research with FFAV, senior leadership asked me to assist with their evaluation. By not formulating a concrete research plan in advance and acknowledging FFAV's input on the research, my actions aligned with participatory research (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Mellor, 2007) and the PE was the foundation of my doctoral research. Thus, the decision to do a PE was organic and grew from the idea that FFAV was going to conduct an evaluation regardless of my involvement. But, due to my position as an outside academic, it was decided I could offer a different perspective and assist with the research. Along these lines, as an academic researcher with my research expertise, FFAV staff and I provided our distinct knowledge and experience to the research process.

Following Cousins and Earl's (1992) five requirements of a PE, FFAV and I found that an evaluation was important due to the current handover climate. The importance of a PE resulted in coordinating and planning with FFAV staff. Meetings and discussions helped unite FFAV staff and me as a research team, allowing us to collaborate on why this PE was important and necessary and set a clear definition and plan as to how we were going to implement the PE. Fieldnotes from one of the first meetings about the PE in September 2016 described,

Today we had a meeting about the evaluation. All of the management team and myself were sat in the meeting room to discuss the evaluation of FFAV. Anh Hai facilitated the meeting and spoke for most of the time. . . . The discussion then opened to the group where everyone provided input on what they believed were relevant information to address sustainability. With Anh Hai leading the discussion, he honed in on needing to get evidence of FFAV success to show partners such as DoET and to get information on the difficulties that may prohibit local communities from

continuing activities. In the end, it was determined that three areas we wanted data to inform are to: (1) assess FFAV's impact on children and the education sector; (2) understand difficulties and challenges for FFAV from 2016 to 2018; (3) obtain recommendations for sustainability from local communities. We believed focusing on obtaining data to inform these three areas would help meet the objectives of presenting data to provincial and national partners. Another important resolution was that this evaluation is something I will take lead on and coordinate, but I am not entirely responsible, and it is not entirely about my Ph.D. With that said, FFAV is immensely invested in the research. Lastly, it was officially made known that Chi Ba and I will be working on this whole research project.

During this meeting, we coalesced as a group to create a vacillating dialogue to conclude the most appropriate areas of concern for the PE. Gibbon (2002) and Minkler (2000) state that in forms of participatory research participants must become coresearchers so a mutual gain is shared and processes of learning can occur. The more we engaged in meetings with each other and talked about sustainability and our research, the more we became connected as coresearchers. Also, in being transparent, the meeting confirmed FFAV initiated the PE; however, I would take the lead due to my research background. In the end, FFAV wanted to learn what the experiences of the communities of Thừa Thiên Huế were with FFAV programs and activities, drawing on areas in which there were positives, negatives, and room for improvement.

However, the fieldnotes above highlight a point of contention of the PE. That is, "*needing to get evidence of FFAV success to show partners such as DoET"* strayed from focusing on the needs and ways to assist local communities in taking ownership of activities. By doing so, the focus of the PE shifted from the local communities' concerns to FFAV wanting to keep FFAV activities going. As a novice in participatory research, I missed this evaluation tension by focusing too much on aiding FFAV with its research endeavors.

Research Process: Methods, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Actionable Results

The PE here was a research partnership between FFAV and me. This section explores the processes of how this relationship went about selecting appropriate methods, analyzing data, and disseminating results of a PE.

Creation of Methods. Humble and Smith (2007) advise that methods should be beneficial for enacting change and should be influenced by stakeholders. Then through discussions, and within the research parameters, the chosen methods must fit the questions and interests of the local communities (Fawcett et al., 2003). Identifying appropriate methods and frameworks ought to be done in conjunction with academic researchers and their partners (Fawcett et al., 2003; Frisby et al., 2005). To capture a wide range of data, FFAV leadership decided on province-level data collection with various stakeholder groups via semistructured interviews and focus groups.

USAID (2011) instructs that those key informants who make decisions should be interviewed in a semistructured format, while participants who have knowledge and experience of what is being evaluated are better suited for focus groups. In this PE, stakeholders included: government officials from the provincial DoET, headmasters, physical education teachers, parents, and youth participants of FFAV programs. In discussions with FFAV, we decided that semistructured interviews with government officials and community leaders (e.g., headmasters) would provide insight into what local and key Vietnamese informants perceived as successes of FFAV and barriers to maintaining activities. Interview questions varied by group (e.g., government authorities, headmasters, and physical education teachers), but they primarily centered on the perceptions of local beneficiaries regarding FFAVs influence in the province and the reasons communities could be able to continue activities without the project. For example, questions for headmasters focused on what FFAV brought to their school that may not have been present before. In contrast, focus groups with parents sought to draw out what would deter them from allowing their children to participate in activities.

Focus groups were determined to be the best method for physical education teachers, parents and young people because it would allow these groups to speak among themselves about their experiences with FFAV. Of particular importance were that these groups were those implementing activities (e.g., physical education teachers) and those identified as direct beneficiaries (e.g., young people). Thus, it was pivotal to garner the sentiments of their experiences with FFAV and specifically asked them what actions they could take to help continue activities.

Last, regarding methods, as an outsider of FFAV, my expertise was utilized through direct observations of FFAV programs and activities. Direct observations are recorded details of what is seen and heard of a program including but limited to activities, discussions, and physical surroundings (USAID, 2011). Similar to Atkinson's (2012) conception of participant observation, through active participation as a volunteer with FFAV and assisting with the PE, direction

observations occurred as I paid attention to interactions, comments, and expressions during FFAV SFD activities. This process allowed for documentation of criticism as well as supportive moments of FFAV.

Admittedly, while I was able to assist with creating interview guides and write reports or fieldnotes, FFAV staff demonstrated their knowledge by providing input and educating me about how to conduct research in Vietnam. Chi Ba was one person whose advice and experience researching Thừa Thiên Huế was worth much more than, I, the "trained researcher" could provide. Reverting to preparing the PE, I certainly did not have the experience and knowledge of the everyday lived reality in Thừa Thiên Huế that FFAV staff held. Many times, I witlessly went about the research in an academic mindset. For example, when drafting interview guides, I often used academic jargon challenging to translate to Vietnamese. In correcting me, Chi Ba advised keeping the questions straightforward so participants could understand the questions and answer coherently. Here are fieldnotes from a December 2016 meeting between Chi Ba and me where we discussed the interview guides:

Chi Ba is so good at this stuff. She is definitely taking part in the participatory nature of this research. Her comments on the interview guides are great. She has knowledge and experience that is making this research process and evaluation that much better. It's insightful when she is able to comment. Being able to work with her through these things is something I believe participatory research needs. Her knowledge and experience in FFAV, while also being a participant in my study is something greatly needed in SFD research. Just got some focus group guides back from Chi Ba and she is way better at facilitating these things compared to me. She's got so much experience in all of this it's crazy.

As depicted in this excerpt, this specific PE could not have been carried out without the knowledge and experience of FFAV staff. Chi Ba's experience was undeniably crucial to how the PE was conducted. This example reflects how FFAV staff and I learned from each other throughout the project (Greenwood et al., 1993; Ponic et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2005). Mostly as a less knowledgeable outsider to FFAV, it was essential that FFAV staff led the PE and that I provided input when necessary. This dynamic helped us be open about appreciating each other's knowledge and experience, leading to mutual learning moments. Indeed, the PE and participatory research developed due to Chi Ba's willingness to help and provide her knowledge.

Data Collection. Spaaij et al. (2018) note that no two participatory projects are alike, meaning every instance and experience of data collection within a PE will occur differently, based on disparate needs, resources, and settings. PE as a methodology is constantly adapting to be inclusive of the construction of research questions and methods, as well as to create spaces to talk about the research issues and process. The PE here had us embark on trips to each district of Thừa Thiên Huế where each trip presented different encounters; thus, it was important to have interchangeable data collection processes and flexible schedules.. My fieldnotes from our November 2016 trip to Nam Đông district describe the situation:

We get to Nam Đông around 8:30 am and the leader of the SuB-DoET in Nam Đông, at a coffee shop where we meet. . . . At 9:15 we go to the first school and FFAV Club of the day, Huong Huu primary school. We get to the school and are greeted by the headmaster and a FFAV coach. We walk to the headmaster's office where there is a large rectangular table with water and tangerines for us to enjoy. Introductions are made by physical expert introducing the school's staff, FFAV staff, and the local parents. Anh Ba from FFAV formally introduces why we are doing the evaluation to the school and thanking everyone for their time.

Anh Ba makes his remarks about why we are doing this evaluation to the school and thanking them for their time. . . . It's decided that I along with the volunteer who is helping me translate will interview the headmaster, Chi Ba and Em Hai will do the focus group with the children, Anh Ba will interview the coaches, and Anh Tam will interview the parents. . . . The interviews start as people go with their groups to different locations.

Illustrated above was a routine data collection trip consisting of introductions and a schedule of events where local beneficiaries were advised of the purpose and how the PE would occur. Data collection trips consisted of a multitude of moving parts and potential chaos. Plans were disrupted when someone from the local community was late or did not have the adequate time devoted to the PE. In learning from these experiences, as a research team, we learned to adapt the plans at the moment, conduct interviews in whatever spaces were open, and ensure everyone felt comfortable and accommodated. Car rides after data collection trips were where we often decompressed and conversed about the day's research. Fieldnotes from after the November 2016 PE trip to Nam Đông district describe these conversations:

We finished data collection in Nam Đông around 4 PM and were back on our way to Hue City. 5 of us total in a little sedan driving through the central highlands. Anh Ba jokes that he wants to go to market. He is known as "Mr. Market" because everywhere he goes, he likes to visit the local market of a district or community to see if they sell anything special (e.g., fruits, produce, or clothes). I asked how today went for everyone. There're some murmurs of it was fine and ok. Chi Ba was more vocal and said that we have a schedule but sometimes the local community members cannot abide by these times. So future research trips need to be flexible. "Em sua" said her focus group with the children from the secondary school was fun because they were very vocal and nonchalantly were not worried about activities continuing. This was interesting because they seemed to acknowledge that they could continue activities on their own. Right here, Chi Ba said we should start asking older youth how they would sustain activities in future trips. We all agreed that would be smart.

As illustrated in the fieldnotes, there were natural components of debriefing and talking about the research process. By eliciting the epistemology on researching with FFAV, the fieldnotes illustrate how this research project was able to collaboratively and effectively set up data collection processes. Insight into organization and car rides home may allow other SFD researchers embarking on PE with program staff to envision better how a PE can occur.

While there were many moving parts to data collection trips, special attention is focused on conducting semistructured interviews with an FFAV intern. Morrell (2008) and Romero et al. (2008) describe that education and learning processes increase when participants are active and contribute to the research. In the field, everyone involved was capable of conducting this PE because it allowed spaces for creating new knowledge and gaining valuable experiences (Veugelers, 2017). An example of this was when one of the FFAV interns who helped me with an interpreter started to ask probing questions during a November 2016 interview with a headmaster of a primary school where FFAV activities are housed:

Having Em Ba as a translator has been an amazing experience because I can see her growing and learning methods by conducting the interviews with me. Throughout the day she also probed and asked other questions that she saw as relevant during the interviews. As I said before eventually PhDs from abroad should probably not doing this kind of research and it should be done by locals. Maybe this is a step to doing something that will create that local research agenda.

Em Ba being able to participate in an inclusive research space possibly allowed her to feel comfortable conducting the interview on her own. I was both surprised and overjoyed once she took over and probed the interviewee because she was usually quiet. So, while my position was the academic researcher, I was certainly not the only person capable to conduct an interview. Em Ba's ability to exhibit her research abilities at the moment emphasizes how this PE data collection allowed for FFAV staff to provide their expertise and knowledge.

Data Analysis. Being the "trained researcher" of the PE, I was primarily responsible for data analysis, in which a thematic analysis was undertaken to draw out common perceptions of participants (Smith & Bryan, 2004). Data analysis in participatory research may span the spectrum from more traditional models where only one person (usually the academic researcher) conducts the analysis alone or where some, but not all coresearchers are able or willing to help with the analysis (Cahill, 2007). Thus, similar to Reid et al. (2006) who utilized member-checking in their PAR project, FFAV staff members were regularly checked to clarify what was emerging from the data.

Through a thematic analysis, themes emerged inductively through constant coding of data (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Smith & Bryan, 2004). Braun et al. (2016) outline six phases of thematic analysis ranging from familiarization and coding of data; theme development, refinement and naming; and writing up and results. The familiarization and coding of data, as well as theme development and refinement were two specific phases in which this PE consisted of moments of participatory data analysis. First, I immersed myself in the data to familiarize myself with the most common codes and themes. As I read through the data, I noted common themes that appeared among the different participant groups. In addition to indicating common themes in the data, I highlighted different specific quotes, moments, and notes that exemplified these themes. Following Torre et al. (2007) who said everyone should be encouraged to participate in the data analysis was co-constructed with FFAV. Hence during this first step, FFAV staff members were often asked what they thought about themes emerging from the data analysis, and they would inform me of their perspective or clarify perceptions. For example, clarification was needed from a staff member about their notes on if physical education teachers wanted less training from FFAV or whether physical education teachers were concerned about how money from FFAV was being distributed among the province's clubs. He clarified that some physical teachers wanted less training from FFAV on grassroots football and would rather have the funding for these training be distributed to support their

FFAV football clubs.

In turn and aligned with Braun et al.'s (2016) phase of theme development and refinement, I coded and created labels for data that evoked connections to the purpose of the PE. As themes developed and were constantly being refined, I made sure to review the emerging themes with FFAV staff. Chi Ba was one specific person whom I turned to for peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While Chi Ba was not necessarily a disinterested peer, as should be in peer debriefing, her removal from the data analysis process allowed her to guide me and inquire about the emerging themes. The constant discussion of themes with FFAV staff culminated once it was perceived that data saturation was complete.

Unfortunately, data analysis yielded tensions around how data and notes were collected. Since we did not audio-record interviews with local participants, as FFAV staff advised that recording participants may cause them to be wary, data were collected via handwritten notes. Reflecting on the process as a collective group, we did not have clarity on how to write down data or take fieldnotes. The lack of clarity on how to collect data would prompt me to ask FFAV staff for more clarity on their notes and, at times, become frustrated when writing up the analysis. This is depicted in my fieldnotes from December 2016:

I hate to say it but some of the interview data that I'm looking at are just bullet points. There's no substance to the data where I can sift through and try and find some themes. But I got to go with it. It's part of the research process that we are doing. This was done in a participatory manner and so it goes that data is the way it is.

Reflecting on the process of the PE, I realize that although FFAV staff and I had discussed what methods to use and how to conduct interviews, we had not discussed how the data would be collected. In turn, the PE process could have used more discussion on the best way to capture data. Specifically, since I was the one writing the report, I could have been more direct on what approach to data collection would allow me best to balance authority and expertise in PE research (Daigneault & Jacob, 2009). Further conversations about best practices for data collection were needed to ensure clarity and consistency.

Actionable Results. As noted by Cousins and Earl (1992), a main outcome of PE is to produce results that would lead to practical actions for an organization to implement. Thus, the data collected for this PE revealed broadly that government officials were reluctant about assuming the responsibility of FFAV programs and activities and that overall local communities believed they could sustain activities without FFAV but had qualms over needing the training to be self-sufficient. For example, participants from local communities generally specified they did not have the resources, nor did they feel comfortable about fundraising for their FFAV football clubs. Headmasters, teachers, and parents, who understood that they would shoulder the responsibilities, requested that FFAV provide training to develop skills in fundraising and marking. Thus, FFAV visited each district to deliver training to local stakeholders on how to fundraise. Fieldnotes from a May 2017 fundraising workshop describe this situation:

In order to build the capacity and inspire local communities to take on the challenge of self-financing their activities, the fundraising team has worked hard at bringing new methods to engage participants. There is a session that asks the participants to break into groups and discuss the challenges to fundraising in their communities, as well as ways to overcome these fundraising challenges. . . . Some challenges brought forth in the workshops include areas of districts are not financially stable, very little corporations to interact with, and people do not have experience in fundraising methods; thus, to remedy the lack of experience the fundraising team created role-playing scenarios. Role-playing helps position the participants into scenarios where they may be seeking money. For example, participants are asked to read letters of financial support to potential donors then after the whole group discusses any mistakes, weaknesses or improvements that they saw. . . . As many participants have no experience in fundraising it is important for them to have exposure in writing letters, approaching potential donors, and to be familiar on how to handle challenges.

While the specific purpose of this paper was on the process of conducting and implementing a PE, it is important to bring attention to what came about in this PE. FFAV realized that they were asking local communities to continue activities; however, adults from local communities indicated they would need proper guidance on topics such as fundraising, as the different districts face different challenges. Moreover, to present this data, in staying with participatory modes of disseminating results in a public sphere (Fine, 2016; Frisby et al., 1997), working with Chi Ba I helped write a report of the PE to be presented to provincial authorities. With the occasional peek over to speak with Chi Ba, who sat two desks away from me, this report was the culmination of the PE. This project started with me not knowing a PE was going to be part of my Ph.D. research, to going through the process of conducting research with FFAV, to finishing with a report.

Research Tensions

As described in the processes of data analysis, there were often times of discomfort and tension, and there were meetings where authority was positioned. It would be disingenuous to write and not acknowledge the uncomfortable moments. The most tense-filled research experience occurred during the second meeting I had with the vice-director of FFAV. I was talking about ethnography and participant observations and how doing these methods would benefit "my own data." She stopped me mid-sentence and said, "Michael, this is too much about your research than it is about the FFAV evaluation." In unthinkable fashion during my first week, I had put forward the attitude of an academic know-it-all. My fieldnotes from that September 2016 meeting reflect my feelings:

I messed up today. I came in big with my academic background. The biggest event that happened today was my conversations with (FFAV vice-director) about the areas of focus and research for the evaluation. She had asked me to talk about methods and I mentioned ethnography and how on my own I was collecting ethnographic data for my own data. I explained that I was going to use this as my own data in writing about the research process. I think we got into a clear disagreement that got into a rather heated discussion about what needs to be done in regard to the evaluation. I definitely came across more concerned about my dissertation and she even said that I was speaking too much about my own research than the FFAV evaluation. I really don't know what I'm doing or if I belong here.

Reflecting on this moment, in the beginning stages of this PE I needed a moral and ethical engagement to FFAV. Regrettably, the focus was on research that would produce a dissertation neglecting the needs of FFAV and local stakeholders. Overall, in participatory research, let alone PE, there needs to be a commitment to the collaborators in research for actionable change (Barab et al., 2004; Mellor, 2007). At this moment, my use of academic language distanced me from the people with whom I was conducting research, and instead I needed to centralize their words and reality to demonstrate the current situation (Torre et al., 2007). Gratefully, this meeting occurred during the beginning of my research with FFAV. Throughout the next 10 months, I became more aware of my positionality by reflecting on my fieldnotes and by having honest conversations with FFAV staff. I caution others that before they enter a research space to be aware of their position and power, as well as to begin thinking of the research "space" as a place that many people occupy (Atkinson, 2012; Barab et al., 2004; Mellor, 2007). Once a researcher enters a space where people are living, the space changes and becomes a place where they work with others to recreate the world that is studied (Fine et al., 2003). When doing any kind of participatory work, there will always be tension. Accordingly, aligned with Warhman and Zach (2016), SFD researchers need to take risks and become more engaged within the research setting to have an emic approach informed by those whose questions need answers.

DISCUSSION

PE has become an increasingly useful methodology in SFD. In this paper, I highlight a different perspective of PE by focusing on a research relationship between myself and FFAV. The insights provided detail the first-hand account of participatory research with an SFD project (Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016) by specifically focusing on the PE methodological process. Acknowledging the rich depictions of PE provided by Halsall and Forneris (2016) and Oatley and Harris (2020), consideration must be paid to how PE is conceptualized in different ways with different people. In turn, the experience serves as a reminder that individuals, especially novices, doing participatory research may encounter obstacles and uncertainty (Spaaij et al., 2018). More stories that exemplify the complex nature of PE are needed to improve the facilitation of this methodological process in SFD research.

Illustrated here are a researcher's perspectives on initiating a PE, the creation of methods and data collection, and tensions that arose during research; participatory research can be a difficult but worthwhile endeavor. Similarities are drawn to both Halsall and Forneris (2016) and Oatley and Harris (2020), who highlight the ability and knowledge of stakeholders in the research process. In contrast, the brief results indicate that the PE motivated FFAV to provide varied training that may assist local communities in continuing activities. However, as exemplified, in PE, tensions stem from what groups are involved and the constant shifts in power and agency by those involved in the research. For example, the PE at hand was a research relationship between myself and FFAV; thus, the research process was primarily centered on the SFD organizational level.

Two important caveats must be made. One is that even though this PE was intended to gather data that FFAV would use to help local communities sustain FFAV activities once the handover was complete, local community members (e.g., headmasters, teachers, parents, and youth participants) were excluded from the PE process. This potentially leads to a discrepancy between the actions of FFAV and the needs of local communities. This also leads to the critique that FFAV staff (myself included) were more

concerned with the legacy of the project instead of the lived reality that may deter local communities from continuing activities on their own. Second, this paper was written from the perspective of the researcher. Future papers of PE should be written with organizational staff to depict clearly the research relationship.

Broadly, reverting to implications in SFD research, this paper is intended to highlight how PE and participatory research can be done. That is to say, while participatory research has been suggested and carried out (see Burnett, 2008; Hayhurst et al., 2015; Reis et al., 2015; Spaaij, 2009 Whitley et al., 2014) there is still room to improve and conduct better research (Nicholls at al., 2010). First-hand commentary into the research partnership between FFAV and myself may allow for future researchers to acknowledge the challenges and successes they may face with an SFD organization (Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016). One specific research suggestion is to embark on an all-inclusive PE similar to Hall and Oatley (2020) that specifically examines the relationship between SFD project and SFD beneficiaries. Indeed, to conceptualize and unpack this direct relationship in PE may yield enlightening insight to how PE can be conducted between SFD organizational staff and the intended beneficiaries. As well, an SFD PE project that directly examines sustainability and ownership of activities within local communities is greatly needed. A research project of such importance will provide insight to how and why certain locales aim to undertake SFD activities from their partners.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to illustrate how one may conduct participatory research, and by extension evaluation, with an SFD project. For Tandon (1981) and Mellor (2007), the main purpose of participatory research is to increase knowledge about a localized social setting with the hope and goal for positive change to occur. In utilizing my experiences with PE as a place of departure and argument, this paper outlines PE and the potential and difficulties of this method as one particular option that can be utilized in SFD research, both as an answer for the many calls for increased participatory research and as an example of the power and potential of collaboration and inclusion of often silenced voices. In practice, the application of PE can be utilized by individual SFD projects and organizations, as outlined by their challenges and needs. The potential for academic research and SFD practice to converge in PE can undoubtedly lead to benefits that will speak to both sides, presenting data that can answer a diverse array of questions and concerns.

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