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Original Research

"Learn how to keep going": Applying strengths perspective and hope theory to girls in CrossFit

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research relied on in-depth interviews to understand the experiences of at-risk girls who participated in CrossFit. Sports and physical activity-based programs have long been used to address social problems and offer new opportunities for at-risk youth. These programs are often designed keeping the youth in settings with their peers. In this study, four at-risk girls were integrated into traditional CrossFit classes that were more representative of their lived realities, exposing them to participants of different ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds. We combined the strengths perspective and hope theory to examine their experiences. Our findings demonstrated that integrated fitness programs can help at-risk girls achieve successful outcomes. This research also underscored the utility of combining the strengths perspective with hope theory, as we found that hope was an essential element that allowed the girls to realize their inherent strengths and to apply these strengths to other aspects of their lives.

"LEARN HOW TO KEEP GOING": APPLYING STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE AND HOPE THEORY TO GIRLS IN CROSSFIT

Middle school is hard for Marley, but she has found a place that feels like home. It helps that everyone speaks to her by name when she enters the gym, creating excitement and enthusiasm. Being one of the youngest people in the gym does not bother Marley, and instead it encourages her to continue coming back.

As the CrossFit trainer explains the workout, Naomi gets excited when she sees that it is full of running, with minimal heavy lifting. Although Naomi will have to work hard in this workout, she knows this will make her stronger for dance team competitions. The other participants in the class tower over the effusive, small frame middle school girl who seems to have endless amounts of energy.

Chloe walks in the gym with her mom and stays close to her throughout the session. As they get boxes out, Chloe quietly asks how hard the workout will be. Half way through, Chloe briefly sees her mom taking a break on the step ups, and she positions herself to keep her mom in her line of sight, the two of them working out side-by-side until they have completed the workout. As they exit the gym together, Chloe asks her mom what she thought about the difficulty of the workout. They continue the conversation all the way home.

Rochelle stands in the middle of the gym, dripping in sweat, looking around at everyone else working out. Sometimes she notes that very few people look like her: brown skin, kinky hair, teenage girl, the same outfit as the last time she was there. Looking at the middle-aged teacher next to her deadlifting the same weight, she imagines what

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responsibilities the teacher has after leaving the gym. This only catches her attention for a few seconds, and she shifts attention back to her barbell to complete the workout.

All four of these girls work out at CrossFit-Strength & Hope (CF-S&H)[1] , a CrossFit affiliate gym. Established in 2012, CF-S&H wanted to provide a space for the community to come together through fitness and live a healthy lifestyle. CF-S&H quickly saw positive outcomes with their teenage and adult members and wanted to expand their offerings to children. In 2014, CF-S&H started a CrossFit Kids program for any young person in the community. Generally, CrossFit Kids promoted the aspect that every workout was scalable so it could properly be adjusted for each child and their experience (Bakshi, 2009). Researchers found that children participating in a CrossFit Kids program improved their grades (Bakshi, 2009), fitness levels (Sibley, 2012), and made gains in strength, confidence, and competence (Garst et al., 2020). However, due to the high costs of a CrossFit membership, participation in the CF-S&H children's program was out of reach for some youth. To combat the barrier of expense, CF-S&H took a special interest in contributing to the local community by providing programming for at-risk children. In addition to creating separate programs to target this population, they funded sponsorships for low-income children to engage in regular classes, and they offered summer day camps that featured sliding scale membership fees that were subsidized by sponsors.

The involvement of at-risk youth at CF-S&H evolved over time. For instance, 15 at-risk youth (mostly boys) started coming to CF-S&H when the facility entered a partnership with a local afterschool program called A Place for Kids (APfK)[2]. This partnership made it possible for APfK members to participate in a youth CrossFit program at CF-S&H. According to the APfK administrators, 94 % of their membership came from minority and/or low-income families. Many came from single-parent or caregiver homes and the children enrolled typically had limited options for extracurricular opportunities. Initially, a program was created for girls and boys from APfK where the participants came to the CF-S&H facility and participated in CrossFit classes with their own group. Although these children improved their goal setting techniques and honed in on transferable skills like focusing and resilience, Gipson et al. (2018) found that the children did not fully understand the intent of CrossFit. The scholars suggested that this was due to lack of parental involvement, as the children admitted not talking to their parents about the program. Additionally, the scholars found that although the children were at CF-S&H, they only interacted with the coaches and the group they arrived with, meaning this was no different from being at the APfK. Gipson et al. (2018) recommended integrating participants in traditional classes with teens and adults, especially when children are in roles in their home lives where they take care of younger siblings or take it upon themselves to make sure they make it to school. Therefore, children from the APfK integrated into traditional CrossFit classes their second year as it was thought that the setting was representative of the girls' lived realities. CF-S&H also sponsored a summer day camp open to all children, not just those identified as at-risk.

PURPOSE

In this study we were interested in examining the experiences of at-risk youth with CrossFit when in settings that were more similar to those of their daily lives, e.g., with adults and teenagers, teachers and nurses, college students, affluent middle schoolers, retirees. Although a large body of research has been conducted on interventions designed specifically to cater toward at-risk youth, little attention has been given to programs that integrate at-risk youth into real world settings to support social development. Our study began by examining how the girls' experiences in CrossFit at CF-S&H impacted their lives. During our discussions with the girls and their mothers, we came to realize that strengths perspective and hope theory could be combined to form a useful lens for investigating youth sport for development. In this paper we apply this new lens, which represents a combination of strengths perspective and hope theory, to the experiences of at-risk girls who participate in the integrated, real world setting of CrossFit.

As research focusing on at-risk youth from the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework often utilizes interventions, it is useful to begin with a general overview of scholarship on youth intervention programs. This overview begins by highlighting the transition from using deficit perspectives in early programs toward the more contemporary emphasis on the strengths-based perspective and the PYD framework. Next we focus specifically on sport-based youth intervention programs, observing that most intervention programs isolate at-risk youth rather than integrating them into the larger community. In contrast, we point out how CrossFit offers an integrated sport setting which is well-suited as a space for at-risk youth to develop and use their own strengths. After discussing our interview methodology and data analysis, we outline and review the separate theoretical approaches of the strengths perspective and hope theory. Finally, we propose that these two approaches be combined, and we apply this new "strength and hope" lens to the lived experiences of the girls who participated in our interviews.

Youth Interventions: From Deficits to Strengths

Historically, interventions focused on identifying and addressing the negative situations and problems of youth such as "learning disabilities; affective disorders; antisocial conduct; low motivation and achievement; drinking, drug use, or smoking; psychosocial crisis triggered by maturational episodes such as puberty; and risks of neglect, abuse, and economic deprivation that plague certain populations" (Damon, 2004, p. 14). Therefore, initial interventions were developed from a problem-centered or deficit perspective (Damon, 2004) which was adapted from a mental-health model (Redl & Wineman, 1951) and the criminal-justice model that has stressed punishment over prevention (Damon, 2004). Intervention programs treated participants as potential problems for society who needed to be fixed before they became actual problems in society.

More recently, scholars have shifted away from the deficit perspective to embrace strengths-based perspectives, such as the PYD framework, which encourage practitioners to envision young people as resources for society (Damon, 2004; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Central to the PYD framework is the assertion that every individual possesses natural and inherent capabilities, and that intervention programs succeed by helping individuals to actualize these latent strengths and skills (Benson, 2003; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Shek et al., 2019; Tolan, 2014). Numerous studies have used the PYD approach on diverse youth and found its positive impact on a variety of aspects of life, including mental health, academic well-being, self-esteem, social confidence, and healthy behaviors (Curran & Wexler, 2017; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2018; MacDonald et al., 2020; Milot Travers & Mahalik, 2019; Newland et al., 2019; Shek & Chai, 2020; Whipple et al., 2020).

Sport-Based Interventions for At-Risk Youth

When working with at-risk youth, there are a variety of sport-based and physical activity intervention programs that have been established to achieve positive outcomes for youth (Petitpas et al., 2005). These interventions programs have found success with reducing the risk of obesity (Martin et al., 2013); lowering the risk of engaging in delinquent behavior (Miller et al., 2007); addressing mental health issues like depression and anxiety (Stubbs & Rosenbaum, 2018); and increasing social engagement, social inclusion and citizenship (Parker et al., 2019).
Further, despite girls and boys being affected by similar social risk factors, there is evidence to suggest that sport for development programs are more often created with boys in mind, resulting in an underrepresentation of girls in these programs (Bruening et al., 2015; Collison et al., 2017; Farello et al., 2019). To address this underrepresentation, researchers using the PYD framework have tailored programs for girls, by focusing on various components of relationships between participants, mentors and mothers (Bruening et al., 2009, 2015), training coaches to use self-determination theory in their coaching practices and curriculum lessons (Walters et al., 2020), forming leadership panels with girls as leaders and using a Youth Participatory Action Research curriculum (Chard et al., 2020), and providing space for girls-only (Johnston et al., 2019) to provide a better understanding of girls' experiences and long-term development in the area.

What is interesting about these sport-based intervention programs is that because they are specifically designed to serve at-risk youth, the programs are structured in such a way that they segregate and isolate these youth. Most interventions, whether or not they are based on sports, create spaces and opportunities for the empowerment of participants. The sport-based interventions discussed above all targeted a specific group of at-risk youth and had positive outcomes for the participants (Bruening et al., 2015; Johnston et al., 2019; Martin et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2019). Notably, a large body of research on youth behavior links peer pressure with negative behaviors, and highlights how risky behavior can be reduced when the youth are exposed to a wider array of people outside of their peer groups (Crockett et al., 2006; Prinstein et al., 2001; Simons-Morton et al., 2001; Sullivan, 2006; Sullivan & Larson, 2010; Werch et al., 2003). Therefore, some programs align with local community organizations and develop youth-adult partnerships to expose participants to positive relationships (Bruening et al., 2015; MacDonald et al., 2020; Sullivan & Larson, 2010). Such programs are innovative in the way that they promote relationships between youth and others in their wider community. It is these relationships which are shown to enhance youth development and community engagement, such that youth and adults learn from one another, the youth attain an increased sense of belonging. Broader research on youth development points to positive outcomes when youth are integrated into their communities (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Sullivan & Larson, 2010; Zeldin et al., 2003, 2013). Many programs for at-risk youth report successful outcomes, yet these interventions rarely offer youth the opportunity to interact with people of various races, genders, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Gipson et al., 2018). Therefore, studying at-risk youth within traditional sport or fitness programing which facilitates positive youth development may provide a unique and different perspective on the participants' experiences.

CrossFit as a Setting for the Integration for At-Risk Youth

CrossFit is a branded fitness regime that started in 2001. Rooted in being "broad, general, and inclusive" (Glassman, 2007, p. 4), the CrossFit model uses high-intensity functional training to develop participants in three different training modalities: gymnastics, weightlifting, and metabolic conditioning. Regular CrossFit classes cater to athletes of all ages, genders, and abilities by enabling athletes to choose their weights and modify movements, which in turn encourages participants to alter the prescribed workouts to their skill-level (Eather et al., 2016; Sibley, 2012). Despite research highlighting latent misogyny within the CrossFit culture (Dawson, 2015; Knapp, 2015; Nash, 2018; Schrijnder et al., 2020; Washington & Economides, 2016), CrossFit is well-suited for the development for at-risk girls for a variety of reasons. For example, the ability to modify workouts is empowering as it offers participants greater autonomy and makes the activity accessible for all (Schrijnder et al., 2020). In addition, the ever-changing variety of workouts serves to improve participant engagement and enjoyment (Eather et al., 2016), while the emphasis on celebrating individual progress promotes goal-setting (Gipson et al., 2018), and also engenders a strong sense of community that in turn fulfills social needs of participants (Davies et al., 2014).

METHODS

In this qualitative study we used convenience sampling to conduct in-depth interviews with at-risk girls who participate in CrossFit to understand these girls' experiences in an integrated sport setting. All our interview participants were introduced to the activity of CrossFit through CF-S&H.

Interviews

Although most youth participants at CF-S&H were male, we were especially interested in learning about the experiences of the at-risk girls who have participated in these sport development programs. We invited the five girls and their mothers participating in CF-S&H youth programming to participate in interviews. Of the five, we conducted in-depth interviews with four girls and their mothers. Each of these girls can be classified as at-risk youth based on household structure and family income. These four girls took different paths to join CrossFit. Two of the girls (both African American) were first involved through their afterschool program, APfK, from August 2015 until May 2016. The other two girls (both white) first started through the week-long summer camp held at CF-S&H in 2016. After their initial involvement, some of the girls pursued additional opportunities in CrossFit, such as by joining regular adult classes. All four of the girls were raised in single-parent homes where the mother was head of the household. Background information for each of the interviewees is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Name	Age	Race	CrossFit Experience	Family Structure	Mom's Education	Mom's CrossFit Participation
Marley	10	white	CF Kids summer camp adult classes	divorced/single income <$10,000 3 people in household	MS	yes
Chloe	13	white	CF Kids summer camp adult classes	divorced/single income $40,000-49,999 3 people in household	BS	yes
Naomi	12	black	APfK adult classes	divorced/single income <$10,000 2 people in household	AA	no
Rochelle	13	black	APfK summer camp adult classes	single income $20,000-29,999 5 people in household	HS diploma	no

The interviews were conducted in December 2016 and lasted between one and two hours and were conducted in public meeting spaces. There were always two interviewers present, with one person taking the lead on asking questions and the other, who was also a CrossFit coach familiar to both the girls and their mothers, asking follow-up questions and helping to clarify when the participant might not have understood a question. None of the other interviewers were CrossFit participants, which allowed them to ask for more basic explanations of the participants' CrossFit experiences, and they did not have any previous connections to the research participants. Both the girls and their mothers were made aware of the interview procedure and the purpose of the interviews and they gave written consent to participate in the research. During the first part of each interview, both the girl and her mother were present, and the interview was conducted as if it were a conversation among the four people who had gathered (the girl, her mother, and the two interviewers). Toward the end of each interview the girl was dismissed, and the discussion continued with her mother.

Coding and Data Analysis

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and each member of the research team was able to read the interview transcripts independently before we met to discuss our general impressions. During these early meetings, we realized that the girls' experiences seemed to contain elements of both the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1996) and hope theory (Snyder, 2002). Although we had set out with a general goal to learn about the experiences of at-risk girls in CrossFit, we soon came to the realization that there might be utility in combining the strengths perspective and hope theory to better understand the girls' experiences in this sport for development program. Using a priori coding (Saldaña, 2009), we identified key themes of the strengths

perspective and hope theory and then developed codes to represent these themes (see Table 2). After identifying our list of codes, we met as a group to apply the codes to the interview transcripts. In these meetings, each team member had their own copy of the transcript to read and mark. Each team member would read a page of the transcript and independently identify the appropriate codes for the data on that page. We would then take turns discussing how we had coded that page, explaining why particular codes were selected, and having more in-depth discussions when there was disagreement or uncertainty as to whether a code should be used. This collaborative process allowed us to make final decisions about how to code each transcript.

Table 2. List of codes

Code	Definition
EVENT	denotes important events that represent significant moments in the girl's life
MEMBERSHIP	indicates that the girl expressed a sense of belonging to a group (family, CrossFit gym, dance troupe, sports team, etc.)
HOPE-INDUCING	quality relationships that help the girls develop agency and pathways toward goals
RESILIENCE	persevering in difficult circumstances; overcoming challenges; exposure to adversity
EMPOWERMENT	exhibits a combination of being aware of limits and also recognizing that it is possible to overcome limits
CONFIDENCE	increased self-assurance and positive self-esteem
SELF-DETERMINATION	taking action on one's own behalf; charting one's own course

Strengths Perspective

The strengths-based approach has been utilized within social work practice and research for several decades. Rather than focusing on the weaknesses of the individual, family, or community, the strengths perspective examines the strengths, knowledge, capabilities and resources of all (Saleebey, 1996). Each person is treated as unique, and they are recognized as experts when it comes to understanding their life experiences (Saleebey, 1996).

Clinicians who employ the strengths perspective use words like membership, empowerment, and resilience to help individuals recognize their own resources. Membership refers to being a responsible and valued member of a group (Saleebey, 1996). Social workers practice empowerment when helping others overcome the constraints that limit them through increasing their awareness of these pressures (Ackerson & Harrison, 2000; Pinderhughes, 1994). People who are resilient deal with these tensions and conflicts and develop skills, abilities, knowledge, and insight (Saleebey, 1996). Resilience can lead to confidence and improved self-esteem (Heyne & Anderson, 2012).

Importantly, this perspective does not ask people to deny their difficulties, but to recognize that their strengths were built because of the challenges they experienced. Through the work done between social workers and their clients, people are not discounted because of their label but are asked to recognize and utilize the qualities, skills, and resources of the client to meet their needs and address their challenges (Saleebey, 1996). For the purposes of this study, when clients recognize that they can use their strengths to make choices in their lives and move toward their chosen goals, they have self-determination (Ackerson & Harrison, 2000; Dattilo et al., 1998; Heyne & Anderson, 2012).

Hope Theory

By using resources to address their challenges, individuals display hope, "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 287). Agency is built through a sense of successful goal attainment previously, currently, and in the future, while pathways refer to the ability to create successful plans to reach those goals (Snyder et al., 1991). Agency and pathways are not the same, as one may have goal-directed energy but may not perceive the pathways to goal achievement, or one may see their pathways without feeling that they can attain those goals. In both cases, an individual would not have hope because hope requires that both agency and pathways are present. Additionally, hope does not guarantee successful goal attainment, but it increases the likelihood that an individual's goals can be achieved.

Hope is "subjectively defined as people assess their agency and pathways related to goals," and, for each person hope is "consistent across situations and times" so that an individual who has hope in one situation is more likely to also display hope in another situation (Snyder et al., 1991, p. 571). In addition, hope is "fundamentally social in nature," requiring both sharing and participation to look toward a collective future (Paraschak, 2013, p. 237). To this end, "seeing oneself as part of a larger social fabric of responsibility provides the impetus for people to consider how the exercise of their individual agency affects the world and the people in it" (Jacobs, 2005, p. 788). Group membership is important to both the strengths perspective and hope theory. Hope is cultivated when individuals and the groups to which they belong overcome challenges and recognize their own strengths. These relationships with others are hope-inducing because they allow individuals to sense both their agency and pathways toward their goals.

Combining Strengths Perspective & Hope Theory

Based on previous research conducted by Saleebey (1996) and Paraschak (2013), we propose that combining both strengths perspective and hope theory can show that upon an instigating event, such as joining an organization, individuals become members and sometimes foster hope-inducing relationships (HIR). These relationships help them to develop agency and pathways toward goals, which ultimately leads to empowerment (Paraschak, 2013). In addition to HIR, membership can lead directly to empowerment (Paraschak, 2013; Saleebey, 1996), which can lead to either resilience or self-determination (Saleebey, 1996; Snyder et al., 1991). Resilience can then lead to confidence or self-determination (Heyne & Anderson, 2012), while confidence is also a pathway to self-determination (Snyder et al., 1991).

FINDINGS

The interviews with these four girls and their mothers provided valuable insight to their life experiences and prodded us to think more deeply about the utility of combining the strengths perspective and hope theory for understanding the benefits of girls' involvement in physical activity programs. The data shows that instigating events and hope-inducing relationships can lead to empowerment, resilience, and confidence, which ultimately can be pathways to self-determination. Understandably, the participants in our interviews displayed different levels of confidence, empowerment, and self-determination. Even though Marley demonstrated self-determination through self-advocacy, her story was primarily one of belonging and the role that hope-inducing relationships played in her life. Chloe told a story that focused on resilience. Naomi provided a story of confidence in which developing strength and skills allowed her to take a leadership role on her competitive dance team. Rochelle conveyed a story of responsibility and self-determination in which she chose to look outward in order to help others. The following sections examine these themes in more detail.

Instigating Events

Each of the participants identified several instigating events that were impactful in their lives and personal development. For example, Marley was first introduced to CrossFit through her mom, who started taking adult classes several years prior. Marley reported that when she was younger, she enjoyed watching her mom's workout and began to wonder, "can I do that?" She said, "It looked fun…and I liked watching [mom] lift, and I liked watching a whole bunch of other people lift. It was cool." Marley would occasionally participate in a few exercises during her mom's workout session, which led Marley to join the CF Kids program and the summer camp before eventually joining the adult classes. Even though she is the youngest participant in this study, her mom reports that "everybody said it was time for Marley to start the big classes." Marley recounted the time when she was urged to join the adults, saying "I was excited and was like YES!" She explained how this would allow her to work out more often and be challenged more.

Switching from the CrossFit Kids program to the adult classes was also an instigating event for Chloe, who told us that at first she was intimidated, but that after about a week she became more comfortable because, "I realized I could do it the same as the other people." As with Marley and Chloe, Naomi reported that she enjoyed the adult classes more than the youth-focused afterschool program because the classes moved faster, but also the weights seemed harder. For these three girls, the adult classes were an event that provided a new challenge and led to growth.

Many of the important events in Naomi's life revolved around her dance team, but as she described her experience with dance competition, Naomi and her mother both credited Naomi's involvement in CrossFit with making her a stronger dancer. Likewise, Rochelle attributed her improved physical condition in her physical education classes to her involvement in CrossFit Kids, and it was evident that these CrossFit events were significant in large part because she had performed well in front of her peers, helping to bolster her confidence and pave the way for self-determination.

When we apply the strengths perspective and hope theory to these four girls' experiences, we see that instigating events become touchstones for the girls. These memorable events represent experiences that were often linked to personal growth.

Hope Inducing Relationships

Feeling like you are a part of something is important for all people, and this is especially true for middle school girls. Membership was defined, in this study, as feeling a sense of belonging to a group. Each of these girls took part in the interviews because of their membership with CF-S&H.
In addition, the girls identified other important memberships that shaped their lives. Naomi, for example, explained that she liked to stay active and often asked her mom to allow her to join activities and groups. She appeared to be proud of her long list of memberships and shared her experiences with these different groups, often

discussing how she balanced her multiple memberships. Though CrossFit played an important role in Naomi's life, even more central was her membership with the dance team. Marley described her role as a member of her family, a cheer squad, and a soccer team in addition to CF-S&H. Marley's mom explained that the CrossFit membership was important because Marley was around strong women of all ages and she "feels like one of the [CrossFit] girls" as they text about their own weights and the workouts. Rochelle's mom encouraged her to get involved with school groups and afterschool program activities. Rochelle's involvement in various groups allowed her family to be integrated into the community which provided them with additional resources to manage life in a single parent household with four young children.

Group membership is especially important because of its potential to provide individuals with hope-inducing relationships. Hope-inducing relationships were defined as quality relationships that helped the girls develop agency and pathways toward goals. Although being a member of a group does not guarantee the development of hope-inducing relationships, our interviews revealed that each girl did have hope-inducing relationships upon which they could rely.

For the four girls in our study, family relationships, and more specifically the relationships the girls each had with their mothers, were hope-inducing. For example, Marley's mother explained that she initially brought Marley along with her to her own adult CrossFit workouts because she had nowhere else for Marley to go, but after realizing how intrigued Marley was with the activity, she encouraged Marley to participate. Because of her own close relationship with her daughter, Marley's mother admitted that she had to learn to give Marley space at the gym and set boundaries on herself so that the coaches, rather than the parent, could inform Marley on technique. In this way, we see not only that Marley's relationship with her mother was itself hope-inducing because it allowed Marley to develop her own agency, but that her mother was key to helping Marley develop additional hope-inducing relationships with other adults at CF-S&H. This was a pattern that was repeated with the other girls.

Not only did Marley have a strong relationship with her mother, but she developed important relationships with other women in the CrossFit box. Marley admitted that participating in adult CrossFit can be hard, but she learned that she can rely on other people to help her rise to the challenge and gave her a pathway to her goals. As Marley explained, "Sometimes I've been like, 'I can't do the WOD (workout of the day), it looks horrible' … but now I really don't care. I know somebody will help me. I can do it now." In fact, Marley explained that one of the reasons she prefers the adult workouts to the CrossFit Kids program is because "everyone is there to help each other and to make each other stronger… Everyone is worried about themselves in CrossFit Kids. In regular CrossFit, they don't care about themselves, they want to cheer each other on." Marley's relationships with adult women in the gym helped her gain a healthier perspective. CF-S&H hosts women's only workouts that include time for conversations and discussions after the physical exercises are completed. Marley's mother described a time when Marley attended one of these sessions and realized that even some of the adult women whom Marley admired struggle with body image issues. "For Marley, it was like, 'you struggle too?' … That opened a huge door to talk about the struggle, which is a blessing… I am thankful that she feels safe enough to talk to me about it."

Naomi's mother was especially resourceful in seeking out opportunities for her daughter and supporting her participation in these opportunities. Naomi explained, "I just like to stay active and stuff. It's not hard to do anything cause I'm always asking my mom to put me in something." Naomi's mother shared this enthusiasm and would go out of her way to enroll Naomi in extracurricular activities, often finding ways to overcome obstacles for Naomi's benefit. Given their household's low-income status, Naomi's mother opted to serve as a volunteer dance team coach in order to have Naomi's participation fee waived, demonstrating her commitment to helping Naomi maintain group memberships and develop hope-inducing relationships with those around her. Naomi used these opportunities to foster hope-inducing relationships with adult members of the gym when she moved from CrossFit Kids to the adult workouts at CF-S&H. When talking about this transition, Naomi explained that she preferred the adult group because "it's like more support when you're trying to get stuff done, seeing what they can do and stuff." Not only did Naomi appreciate the support that other CrossFitters provided to her as she is working out, she also recognized the benefit of being challenged by working alongside adults who might be stronger and faster.

Like the other participants, Chloe had a close relationship with her mom. Yet, being able to CrossFit with her mom added another layer to their relationship as they experienced workouts together and had to discover how to interact while at the gym. Chloe's mom began to see herself in her daughter (e.g., the doubt, the intimidation, and the anxiety). But through this space, the two were able to have conversations, and Chloe's mom was able to tell her how proud she was of her. Chloe's relationship with her mother was hope-inducing, but she did not develop hope-inducing

relationships with other CrossFit members. Chloe's comments suggest that she did not really feel a strong sense of belonging in CrossFit. When asked about her experience moving from CrossFit Kids to the adult classes, Chloe told us that it was "intimidating because they've been there for a while and they're stronger and bigger." Though Chloe said she no longer feels intimidated by the adults, she explained that she would feel "better if there were more people my age." One of the characteristics of CF-S&H is that fellow CrossFitters will cheer for each other as they finish a workout, but Chloe found this frustrating and did not like it when she thought that others were watching her during the workout. Hope-inducing relationships play an important role in developing resilience, empowerment, confidence, and self-determination because they provide an opportunity for the girls to develop their own agency and pathways to achieving their goals.

Empowerment

The interviews demonstrated that group membership and the hope-inducing relationships with their mothers and with adult members of CF-S&H fostered empowerment. In our interviews, we learned about situations where the girls were aware of limitations and constraints but were also empowered to identify ways of overcoming the obstacles. Chloe's experiences within the adult classes were empowering as she realized that she could do the same workout, weights, and repetitions as the adult members. When asked to talk about the positive aspects of CrossFit, Chloe mentioned:

You get to see what your strengths are and try to improve yourself and be healthier and learn how to do workouts safely. And you learn how to keep going, you learn mental strength because it takes a lot of mental strength… At the beginning I thought it would be easier to just quit but now I don't want to quit, I want to keep going.

Marley experienced empowerment through conquering the physical workouts, but also through the insights she gained through relationships with adult women, as previously described. Marley and her mom also talked about Marley's internal dialogue when the workout gets hard, and Marley wants to quit. Her internal dialogue could have been a limitation, but this awareness allowed Marley to recognize what she is saying to herself and, further, allowed Marley and her mom to discuss how she can control her internal dialogue. Her mom aimed to curb the negative dialogue to something more positive and productive which can be practiced in the CrossFit setting and carried over into other aspects of her life. The ability to identify one's limits and realizing pathways to overcome these limits resulted mostly from the hope-inducing relationships each girl had, as well as membership in other groups. Importantly, this sense of empowerment could be seen by both the girls and their mothers in other areas of their lives.

Resilience

The empowerment found through their membership and hope-inducing relationships also contributed to the girls' resilience, or ability to persevere, when facing adversity and challenges. As an example, Chloe and her mom discussed their shared experience with CrossFit. Chloe's mom explained, "It was hard for me when she started regular classes because I saw a lot of myself in her, she modeled a lot of my behavior when I first started, I was so intimidated." Chloe recalled that during her first week, when she would get discouraged, her mom would yell at her to keep going. Her mom added:

I was telling her the main thing … to focus on was to finish, just to finish the workout, you know, like you can do it, it's gonna be hard, it's okay if you need to take a break, but just finish.

At another point in the interview, Chloe demonstrated that she had learned this lesson as she told us that CrossFit was "hard." When asked what was hard about it, Chloe then explained, "It was hard to keep going because you want to just quit in the middle but you have to keep going." When posed with another question of whether she ever gave in to the temptation to stop when the workout was difficult, Chloe stated, "I just stood there and rested for a second and took some water and then kept going," adding that the reason she did not quit was because, "I wanted to finish." Chloe explained that through CrossFit, she has gotten more mentally stronger than physically. Chloe's mother agreed as she described a time when Chloe was behind in a tennis game and aggressively came back from behind. She normally had a defeated attitude but dealt with the situation a lot better than she would have pre-CrossFit.

Chloe was not the only girl to demonstrate the link between hope-inducing relationships and resilience. After explaining that she would find out the workouts before attending CrossFit, we asked Marley if she ever chose to skip workouts when she knew they would be hard, and Marley responded that she did not skip because she liked the challenge of finishing and the feeling of getting stronger. Later, Marley talked about not quitting in the middle of workouts because once she started the workout, she knew what it felt like and she knew that eventually it would get more comfortable. She even explained that she liked to prove to herself that she could be successful, which she

described situations both in the box and in school. Marley's mom observed that before finding success in CrossFit, Marley would have screaming meltdowns where she would throw pens because of her frustration with math. Since starting CrossFit and overcoming hard workouts, Marley no longer complained about homework and asked for help when she needed it.

Rochelle also discussed developing her resilience throughout the interview. She explained that after beginning CrossFit she was sore and complained a lot to her mom and grandmother. But then Rochelle compared her CrossFit experience to running track where the first lap was hard, but when she realized she could finish she would do a second and third and each lap got easier. Ultimately, it was largely Rochelle's decision to continue with CrossFit and demonstrated her resilience and self-determination. Rochelle told us, "I like pushing myself to get that goal, to not give up and do the best I can," and she shared that "since this is my first [year of] CrossFit, now I know the process, so next year I might do more difficult things that I never did before."

Resilience was central to Naomi's story. During the interview, Naomi talked about how hard it is to go straight from CrossFit to dance class, saying "it's hard but you keep doing it." Naomi often mentioned being "tired," yet this was something in which she seemed to take pride. She offered fatigue and pain as evidence that she had put in the work needed to improve her performance. Naomi's mother told us that Naomi "complains, but she loves every minute of it," and at one point Naomi used a bragging tone as she stated, "everything hurts." Naomi's mother encouraged this resilience, reacting positively when Naomi persisted in her efforts. Naomi's mother also modeled resilience in the way that she overcame financial obstacles to open doors for Naomi, both through the competitive dance team and membership at APfK.

Confidence

Notably, our interviews demonstrated that the development of resilience and hope-inducing relationships positively affects confidence, which we defined as increased self-assurance and positive self-esteem. For instance, Rochelle was confident enough in her own abilities to help others. Instead of boasting about being better at a movement or exercise, she chose to help her peers so they too could be successful. Rochelle explained, "If I feel like I'm stronger than someone, like if they can't make it or something, I feel like I can help them." This was similar to how she described working on math problems collaboratively as a member of the math team and helping others around her complete their work.

Further, even though Naomi claimed membership in numerous groups, she identified herself as a dancer and showed the most confidence in her dance abilities. Naomi's confidence was exhibited through her willingness to try new things—both with "showing out" on the dance floor and in her willingness to try new activities such as golf, archery, CrossFit, cheerleading, basketball, and taekwondo. Her confidence and self-determination were also on display when Naomi took on leadership roles, stepping in to help others, such as by showing her dance teammates different exercises that would help them improve flexibility and strength. There were times when Naomi was not willing to be out-shone, even by adults. Naomi and her mother recalled a time when Naomi's uncle visited the family and he was trying to impress Naomi, but instead he ended up being the one who was impressed. After showing Naomi how many push-ups he could perform, Naomi told him, "I do CrossFit" and then, as mom explained, "she started doing her pushups too and she was doing them right, and he was like, 'Wow! … Look at my niece!'" Toward the end of our interview, after Naomi left the discussion, the interviewer's first comment to Naomi's mom was, "Honestly – has she always been this confident?" Mom then explained, "CrossFit has really helped her a lot with dancing. I know she's confident. As far as exercising and showing people, she wouldn't have done that before. [Now] she'll be like, 'this is how you're supposed to do it.'" Additionally, Naomi was often picked to be the last one on the line when performing, which meant she got to do extra things for the judges and spectators, serving in many ways as an anchor for the team. Naomi's confidence also enabled her to speak up for herself and the team by recommending routines to the coach, and she demonstrated leadership by showing her teammates stretches and moves.

Self-determination

Finally, empowerment, resilience, and confidence all impact self-determination. Self-determination is an important outcome of the strengths perspective and hope theory, and our research team spent considerable time discussing how to apply this outcome to youth participants. Typically, self-determination indicates that an individual is able to make choices for herself and has a high degree of control over her life. Full self-determination is not something we would expect of middle school youth, as their parents, teachers, and coaches rightfully guide the majority of these students' lives. Despite this, we see evidence that even at their young ages, these girls demonstrated burgeoning self-determination.

The resilience and empowerment Marley gained as a result of her hope-inducing relationships with her mom and members of CF-S&H paved the way for self-determination. Marley's mother explained that Marley has a history of anxiety and anger that stem from a troubled relationship with her father. Her mother related that CrossFit "has helped so much for her to feel physically stronger, emotionally stronger, and be able to say things and stand up for things that children should not have to." Her mom explained that over time Marley's anxiety grew "to the point that worrying about if she was away from me she would die." However, Marley had recently been able to exercise self-determination by deciding to set the terms of visitation with her father. Marley has started to act as her own advocate. On one occasion Marley feared that her father had arrived at school to retrieve her, even though Marley had chosen not to be with him. Marley went to her teacher for help, saying, "I think my dad is here and I am not going with him and this is why" (as related by Marley's mother). Her mother directly attributed this self-advocacy to "not just CrossFit but being around the environment and the empowering impact that has. [It has] translated into every aspect of her life."

During our interview with Chloe, when we asked about her goals and hopes, Chloe talked about long term career goals, and she made a link between what she was doing in school and how her academic studies linked to her desired career. In this way, Chloe's focus on school and education demonstrated her growing self-determination as she was taking the first steps to chart her course in life. Importantly, Chloe's mother explained that Chloe has learned to apply lessons of resilience learned in the CrossFit gym to other parts of her life, such as in school, on the tennis court, and when playing basketball. Chloe's mother told us,

I definitely see it in school … before, with math or anything, if she didn't understand it right away it was meltdown city, it was always 'I can't do this, I can't do this.' And that's one thing I've noticed is that she has learned to calm herself down and be like, 'let me take a break from this and come back to it.'

Her ability to take action on her own behalf and apply her resilience to other areas of life demonstrates self-determination.

Of the four girls we interviewed, Rochelle showed the highest level of self-determination. Likely because of her family structure, Rochelle carried more responsibility than the other participants. Being the oldest of four children in a single-parent home often meant that Rochelle had to take responsibility for herself, and it also gave her the opportunity to make decisions that would impact her family. Being an older sibling, she was patient and able to communicate with others to help them be better, as demonstrated when she would help the other children at the APfK afterschool program. During our interview, Rochelle and her mother also shared that even though Rochelle often helped the household by caring for her younger siblings, she would occasionally exert her independence by going to her grandmother's house when she decided that she needed space. In school, Rochelle was a member of the international club and the math team. Even though her mother stated that she encouraged Rochelle to be involved in a variety of activities, it seemed clear that Rochelle was the one who has chosen to join these school clubs. Rochelle told us that she was invited to join the international club based on "leadership, achievement, and helping people." Rochelle's enthusiasm for helping others is on display at CrossFit, also. Rochelle tells us, "If I feel like I'm stronger than someone, like if they can't make it or something, I feel like I can help them." In this quote, we see Rochelle's true strengths – helping others, demonstrating responsibility and leadership as she worked to empower those around her.

DISCUSSION

This study did not develop another intervention for females identified as at-risk, but instead utilized a CrossFit program that integrated the girls into classes with a diverse array of people. Even as interventions specifically for at-risk females have shown increases in self-esteem, confidence, empowerment and self-determination (Biddle et al., 2005; Bruening et al., 2009; DeBate & Thompson, 2005; Landry & Solmon, 2004; Schmalz et al., 2007; Seal & Sherry, 2018), these traditional intervention programs tend to gather at-risk youth together in a way that insulates them from the wider community. However, there is reason to believe that programs which integrate at-risk youth into the larger community would have added benefits (Gipson et al., 2018). Many non-sport intervention programs have found success by fostering relationships between at-risk youth and community mentors from different backgrounds (Johnston et al., 2019; MacDonald et al. 2020), and yet sport-based intervention programs have not used this model, perhaps because the sport setting tends to separate participants by age and gender in order to foster equitable experiences with the sport. However, CrossFit offers a sport setting where people of widely varying ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds can compete side by side (Gipson et al., 2021). As both DeMartini and Belasik (2020) and Maslic (2019) highlighted, the structure of CrossFit also aligns with other sport for development goals, as it offers high growth, adaptability, and spaces and opportunities to create a sense of belonging. Our research findings revealed that the

integration of our participants into a CrossFit setting obtained results consistent with interventional research for at-risk girls, as our participants were shown to develop hope-inducing relationships that led to empowerment, resilience, confidence, and self-determination.

As sport and physical activity interventions are often created with males in mind, researchers have focused on is increasing females' self-esteem and confidence and empowerment (Bruening et al., 2009; Chard, et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2007; Staiano et al., 2013; Walters et al., 2020), as research has shown females tend to have lower levels than boys. The girls in this study displayed these increased characteristics as they described the importance of transitioning from a youth-focused level of CrossFit, i.e., CrossFit Kids and the APfK program, to the adult classes. As three of the girls recalled this as a significant event, two girls highlighted that people outside of the CrossFit setting taking notice of their strength and ability was memorable.

All four girls shared experiences of empowerment and hope-inducing relationships with their mothers, college students, and other women in the gym. The narratives that were shared echoed the work of Johnston et al. (2019) who found the ability for at-risk girls to develop social relationships with their coaches in a girls-only setting. Additionally, the girls found value in including their mothers in the discussion, and in some cases, in the CrossFit setting as this created a stronger bond similar to the one Bruening et al. (2015) highlighted when including mentors and mothers. Similar relationships from interventions are created in a CrossFit space as the gym norms are to create a supportive community of a diverse group of people (Maslic, 2019).

The girls explained situations where they used resilience and started to develop self-determination in the CrossFit space. The girls shared experiences where they did not think they could complete a workout or thought it would be too hard before even starting. However, the way CrossFit is typically practiced, athletes can modify the workout to each person's ability (Maslic, 2019). Additionally, the community within the CrossFit gym encourages athletes to complete the workout and cheer and support each athlete in their goals (Gipson et al., 2021). The girls shared experiences where they were resilient in workouts and in some cases, the girls explained they adapted a resilient mindset to other areas of their lives, as they were able to describe how they learned to approach challenges by breaking down the big things into manageable tasks. This novel approach to integrating at-risk girls in CrossFit programming created an opportunity for the girls to develop relationships, build hope, and realize strengths.

Paraschak (2013) argued that adopting a strengths perspective that incorporates practices of hope had many benefits for researching Aboriginal physical activity practices. Our work builds on this argument by demonstrating that membership in a group alone is not enough to identify and leverage strengths, and by showing that hope built through relationships is carried beyond those relationships to other areas of life (not just the physical activity).

First, simply being a member of a group did not necessarily lead to feelings of agency and a sense of pathways to reach desired goals; instead, hope was needed. Saleebey (1996) identifies membership as an element of the strengths perspective. However, our findings suggest that membership by itself is not enough to realize one's strengths and that hope is a key part of realizing and leveraging these strengths. For example, Chloe did not feel a strong sense of belonging in CrossFit, and instead her resilience was realized through her hope-inducing relationship with her mother. Additionally, Paraschak (2013) argues that hope is social in nature, and our work supports this argument. The girls in the study recognized that they faced challenges, but had hope that they could reach their goals because of the empowerment, resilience, and confidence they built through their hope-inducing relationships. By identifying empowerment, resilience, confidence, and self-determination in the girls' experiences, we were able to add to Paraschak's work by connecting hope to these elements of the strengths perspective.

Furthermore, although Paraschak's (2013) work focused on physical activity, our analysis demonstrates that the hope and strengths were carried into other areas of life, not just the instigating event or area of membership (e.g., CF-S&H or family). This finding is consistent with Snyder and colleague's (1991) argument that hope is "consistent across situations and times" (p. 571). Each of the girls were able to use their hope and strengths in other areas of their lives, such as school, clubs, family, other sports, and dance. Importantly, they carried these beyond the identified hope-inducing relationships and memberships to areas where these relationships were not immediately present, such as at school where neither coaches, other CrossFit participants, nor mothers were directly overseeing their choices and actions. For both researchers and practitioners, this offers evidence that integrating girls into real-world environments (e.g., CF-S&H) is impactful beyond the setting. It also demonstrates that utilizing both the hope theory and strengths perspective brings a better understanding of how hope plays an integral part in realizing strengths within many settings.

CONCLUSION

Central to the PYD framework is the assertion that every individual possesses natural and inherent capabilities, and that intervention programs succeed by helping individuals to actualize these latent strengths and skills (Benson, 2003; Kochanek & Erickson, 2020; Shek et al., 2019; Tolan, 2014). The integration of at-risk youth in sport programs offers space for growth, opportunities for feeling a sense of belonging, and a place for decision making and adaptability. Successful outcomes are expected in interventions involving at-risk adolescent females; however, our findings suggest that incorporation into a CrossFit program designed to fit within a pre-existing program with a diverse community obtained the same outcomes without an interventional design.

Although interventions based on the strength perspective are not new to physical activity interventions, understanding and using the hope theory to examine at-risk adolescent females without a direct intervention is novel. Our findings add to the existing literature surrounding the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1996), but also builds on the body of literature by combining the hope theory with the strength perspective. This research provides evidence that combining the strengths perspective with hope theory is useful, as we found that hope was an essential element that allowed the girls to realize their inherent strengths and to apply these strengths to other aspects of their lives.

This research is not without limitations. The interviews were intended to obtain the girls' perspective and dive deeper into their experiences of being integrated into a traditional CrossFit program. Although we only included 4 girl-mother pairs, the girls' interviews did not occur alone which may have limited their opportunity to share their experiences. Additionally, the relatively small number of participants represents a limitation. However, the researchers limited the participants to at-risk adolescent females and their mothers which necessarily resulted in a small sample. The consistent findings obtained from the study demonstrate reliability despite the small sample size, increasing our confidence that an inclusive environment offers benefits to at-risk youth. Moreover, utilizing the combined lens of the strengths perspective and hope theory proved valuable for highlighting the centrality of relationships and focusing on the role that hope plays in realizing the girls' inherent strengths.

This appears to be the first study that purposefully includes at-risk adolescents into inclusive programming to strengthen relationship development without an a priori interventional design. Findings from this research offer support for expansion to a larger sample. The positive outcomes from at-risk adolescent girls using an inclusive CrossFit program provide a promising opportunity for future research which should focus on integrated sport-based interventions for at-risk groups with larger sample sizes to determine if the findings are generalizable across all populations.

NOTES

1 Each CrossFit affiliate has a distinctive name. CrossFit-Strength & Hope is a pseudonym.

2 A Place for Kids (APfK) is a pseudonym.

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Research Note

The influence of servant leadership on shared leadership development in Sport for Development

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is critical to the success of sport for development (SFD) organizations that operate in environments characterized by limited resources, growing competition, and blurred institutional boundaries. Previous research has primarily explored the efficacy of different leadership styles within SFD contexts and examined how leadership contributes to key dimensions of organizational capacity, performance, and other related concepts. Servant leadership and shared leadership have emerged as two particularly viable frameworks, yet there remains limited knowledge of how these approaches are developed and related in SFD. The current study is based on surveys from 100 employees of SFD organizations and utilized regression analysis to examine the relationship between salient organizational factors, servant leadership, and shared leadership. Results indicate that after controlling for salient organizational factors, servant leadership explains a significant portion of the variance in shared leadership. The discussion focuses on the theoretical and practical implications of these findings and highlights key areas for future research.

THE INFLUENCE OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP ON SHARED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Many sport for development (SFD) agencies face significant challenges as they often operate with limited organizational capacity within complex and resource-constrained environments (Svensson et al., 2020). These types of challenges are not new in the SFD context (Kidd, 2008). Researchers continue to report ongoing challenges, which warrant increased attention to the type(s) of leadership styles and behaviors that are best suited for SFD contexts (Schulenkorf, 2017; Svensson et al., 2018; Welty Peachey, 2019). SFD practitioners perceive that leadership is a top priority for advancing the management of SFD agencies (Shin et al., 2020), yet Schulenkorf's (2017) seminal review of the current body of knowledge about managerial aspects of SFD identified leadership as a significant area in need of future research. Specifically, Schulenkorf argued that "SFD research around leadership development, management, and succession planning presents an exciting area for further theoretical and empirical debate" (p. 247).

Researchers have explored the nature of different leadership approaches that may have potential value to better manage SFD organizations (e.g., Jones et al., 2018; Kang & Svensson, 2019; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017). Servant and shared leadership have been suggested as two viable leadership approaches since the empowering nature of servant leaders as well as the collaborative nature of shared leadership align with the focal missions of SFD organizations. The emphasis in servant leadership of helping others grow and develop could be critical for helping staff build the confidence and skills to actively participate in shared leadership practices. It is therefore worth exploring

Keywords: servant leadership; shared leadership development; human resources; employees

Prior literature indicates shared leadership plays a significant role in activating organizational capacities, promoting innovative behavior among employees, and enhancing performance (Svensson et al., 2019). Additionally, shared leadership can also result in improved knowledge sharing, power relations, ethical behavior, and enhanced employee experiences in the SFD workforce (Jones et al., 2018; Kang & Svensson, 2019). If shared leadership plays such an essential role in the functioning of an SFD organization, then the development of this form of leadership deserves further attention. Specifically, researchers have suggested that servant leadership may represent a potentially important precondition for the development of shared leadership (Jones et al., 2018; Kang & Svensson, 2019; Whitley & Welty Peachey, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the influence of servant leadership on shared leadership in a national set of SFD organizations in the United States. Specifically, this study drew on a subset of data from a larger investigation of leadership in SFD to initiate dialogue on shared leadership development.

Prior Literature on Leadership in SFD

SFD organizations depend more on paid staff than other types of community sport organizations, which often draw on volunteers and membership structures for administrative leadership (Svensson et al., 2017). These paid employees are often expected to serve in leadership roles. Additionally, most job postings in the SFD field are for executive leadership roles (Whitley et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers have increasingly noted the importance of expanding the existing body of knowledge on leadership within SFD domains (Jones et al., 2018; Welty Peachey, 2019). So what do we know about leadership in the context of SFD?

To date, discussions of leadership in prior studies range from close examinations of particular leadership styles (e.g., Jones et al., 2018; Wells & Welty Peachey, 2016) to those that examine leadership as part of larger studies of SFD organizations (e.g., Svensson & Mahoney, 2020; Zipp & Nauright, 2018). The context in which leadership has been mentioned ranges from an emphasis on leadership development among SFD program participants (e.g., Hancock et al., 2013) and peer/youth leadership within SFD programs (e.g., Lindsey et al., 2017), to the role of executive leaders at an organizational level (Jones et al., 2018). Prior research has also highlighted the link between these multiple levels of influence. For example, Zipp and Nauright (2018) suggested that SFD organizations that aspire to develop the leadership of participants must critically reflect on how they address existing barriers for local stakeholders and if their existing practices reflect the interests of the program beneficiaries. Leadership has also been reported to serve an influential role in developing an organizational climate conducive to innovation within the SFD context (Svensson & Mahoney, 2020), as well as in the form of cross-boundary leadership systems that facilitate creative multi-stakeholder solutions in the SFD domain (Svensson & Loat, 2019). A few prior studies have also focused on network structures of leadership with an emphasis on exploring structures and interactions among members in organizational networks, rather than how specific leadership forms or styles may be developed (Hambrick et al., 2019; Herasimovich & Alzua-Sorzabal, 2021).

Although scholars focused on some components of leadership, few researchers have directly explored or conceptualized specific forms of leadership in SFD. For example, drawing on interview data from staff with Street Soccer USA, Wells and Welty Peachey (2016) found servant leadership—an approach where leaders passionately care for the development and support of staff—empowered staff to take initiative and ownership within an SFD organization, which subsequently helped promote the development of more inclusive and locally relevant programming in the SFD context. Servant leadership represents a leadership style whereby leaders are focused on helping and supporting their followers and putting others' needs and interests above their own (van Dierendonck, 2011). "Since SFD is fundamentally about serving others," Wells and Welty Peachey (2016) reason, "it could be a context where servant leadership is being practiced" (p. 12). In a larger follow-up study, Welty Peachey et al. (2018) explored the use of servant leadership in SFD and how it influenced work-related needs satisfaction. Their results indicated active use of servant leadership in SFD, which was also found to significantly influence followers' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the workplace. Welty Peachey and Burton (2017) suggested servant leadership could be combined with other leadership styles to fully realize an organization's potential in the SFD field. Specifically, they argued servant leadership "is a style of leadership which can be highly effective in [SFD], providing the care, nurture, and empowerment necessary for these positive changes to occur and organizational outcomes to be realized" (Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017, p. 126).

At the same time, a group of researchers has also explored the applicability of shared leadership in the context of SFD, an approach where leadership is a collective effort involving multiple people. Kang and Svensson (2019), for example, argued shared leadership aligns with the value-

based nature of the SFD space and developed a set of propositions about potential outcomes associated with shared leadership as well as the preconditions necessary for developing collective leadership. Vertical leadership (i.e., behavior by a person designated as a leader) was identified as one of the main antecedents of shared leadership development and the authors suggested that servant or empowering leadership styles may be particularly useful. Likewise, based on their case study of shared leadership in a North American SFD agency, Jones et al. (2018) argued that "servant leadership may provide a useful complement to shared leadership in the [SFD] context" (p. 91). More specifically, Jones et al. concluded that shared leadership "offers a viable approach when integrated with vertical strategies, such as servant leadership. These approaches can collectively empower local champions and develop the structures necessary to capitalize on multiple community voices and assets" (p. 93). Therefore, the research question for this study was to test whether servant leadership significantly influences shared leadership development in SFD.

METHODS

The data analyzed and presented in this research note come from a larger study of shared leadership in SFD. These data have been used for other assessments of shared leadership and organizational capacity (Svensson et al., 2019), but separate fields of data were collected specifically for this study to evaluate the relationship between servant and shared leadership. The methods used to collect and analyze the data are outlined in the following subsections.

Sample

An online survey was distributed to a national sample of employees working for SFD organizations in the United States. A single country location was chosen based on the availability of contact information for staff in non-executive leadership positions and to minimize the potential influence of other factors such as language, geographical location, and culture on the results. Therefore, the decision was made to focus on SFD organizations in the United States to access a sufficient sample of non-executive leader staff to test our research question. In the absence of a centralized directory of SFD employees, the sampling frame for this study was created through a systematic review of existing organizational directories of all known national SFD networks (e.g., Up2Us Sports, Laureus Sport for Good Network, Squash and Education Alliance). The website of each identified organization was then reviewed for contact information about staff members. A total of 215 completed surveys were recorded. For this analysis, however, only the 100 completed surveys recorded from respondents in non-executive leadership roles were used since those participants were provided questions on servant leadership behavior by their designated leader.

Measures

Servant leadership was measured using the SL-7 scale, a psychometrically sound global servant leadership scale developed by Liden et al. (2015). In our study, only those respondents serving in non-executive leadership roles were provided the SL-7 scale since the questions ask respondents to rate the behavior of their organizational leaders. For example, "My leader puts my best interests above his/her own." Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for the SL-7 scale (α = .89) indicated excellent internal reliability with regards to the present study (DeVellis, 2012). Shared leadership was measured through Grille and Kauffeld's (2015) Shared Professional Leadership Inventory for Teams (SPLIT). The 20-items of the SPLIT included four elements of shared leadership orientations: (a) task leadership, the degree of which members clearly assign tasks; (b) relational leadership, the degree of which members support to handle conflict in an organization; (c) change leadership, the degree of which members help each other to learn from the past events; and (d) micropolitical leadership, the degree of which members use the network to support other organizations' work. The value of Cronbach's alpha (ranging from .87 to .91) also indicated shared leadership items were internally consistent. A set of descriptive variables were also collected about the organizations where respondents worked.

Data Analysis

A two-stage linear regression approach model was utilized to identify the unique variance in shared leadership explained by servant leadership while accounting for a set of control variables. The first linear regression model was conducted with only a set of controls as predictor variables. Specifically, several organizational-level variables were accounted for, which could influence the level of shared leadership within an organization including: (a) the number of full-time staff, (b) budget size, (c) organizational tenure, and (d) proportion of public funding. A second linear regression model was then tested with servant leadership added as a predictor variable.

RESULTS

The first regression model was statistically significant (F =

2.943, p < .05, Adjusted R2 = .037), indicating that approximately 3.7% of the variance in shared leadership was explained by the four control variables. However, an examination of the regression coefficients indicated that only budget size (ß = -.191, p<.05) had a significant influence on shared leadership. The second regression model was also statistically significant (F = 18.206, p < .001, Adjusted R2 = .473), with the control variables and servant leadership variable explaining approximately 47.3% of the variance in shared leadership. The inclusion of the servant leadership variable led to a significant increase in model fit indices (ΔF = 15.263, ΔAdjusted R2 = .436), indicating servant leadership explained approximately 43.6% of the variance in shared leadership after accounting for control variables. Examination of the regression coefficients for the second model indicated that aside from the servant leadership variable (ß = .658, p < .001), no other control variables had a statistically significant influence on shared leadership (p > .05).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide empirical support for the significance of servant leadership as a means for facilitating shared leadership. To date, such a relationship had been hypothesized (e.g., Whitley & Welty Peachey, 2020), but never substantiated through empirical data. This relationship has significant practical implications for SFD leaders since more inclusive leadership and decision-making processes are critical if desired social change outcomes are to be realized (Whitley et al., 2019). While this study was limited to testing perceived shared leadership among staff, Jones et al. (2018, p. 93) also argue that:

In the SFD context, vertical leadership strategies, such as servant leadership, can assist in both clarifying the purpose of an organization and providing stability in the face of environmental challenges. Once momentum and resources have been developed through this process, [shared leadership] structures can bring voice to the community and use environmental knowledge to optimize practices.

Thus, future studies are warranted on how community perspectives can be developed through shared leadership. Our analysis contributes to the emerging body of SFD scholarship surrounding servant leadership behavior (Jones et al., 2018; Wells & Welty Peachey, 2016; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017; Welty Peachey et al., 2018) by indicating the instrumental role of a servant leadership style for stimulating shared leadership.

The rapid growth of the SFD field has created a significant need for leadership and leadership development to help marshal the resources necessary to achieve desired social change outcomes and missions (Welty Peachey et al., 2020; Whitley et al., 2017). In his reflections on the current state of the field, Welty Peachey (2019) argued "[SFD] practitioners often lack the leadership and entrepreneurial training … necessary to optimize their organization's potential" (p. 249) The results of the present study provide among the first empirical evidence on factors associated with leadership development in SFD and may serve as a starting point for those seeking to cultivate shared leadership. This study contributes to SFD literature by investigating a particular vertical leadership style (i.e., servant leadership) as an antecedent of shared leadership.

An emerging set of studies in the SFD literature have begun to indicate the importance of leadership for the operation and sustainability of SFD organizations. Raw et al. (2019, 2021), for example, reported the critical role of leadership abilities for finding creative ways to manage the paradoxes and internal tensions prevalent within today's SFD environment. Leaders are also increasingly involved in collective monitoring and evaluation efforts as the field responds to external questions about the viability and effectiveness of using sport for good, which requires leaders to work with a diverse set of internal and external stakeholders (Whitley et al., 2020). Therefore, it is imperative for SFD leaders to develop meaningful solutions with the support of relevant stakeholders (Jones et al., 2019). Here, servant leadership behavior enables SFD leaders to meet the needs of the SFD workforce while shared leadership provides a useful way for developing more inclusive and collective forms of leadership to support the missions of SFD organizations.

As an example, former youth participants who are re-engaged in new roles as staff members can play important leadership roles "in taking the organization forward by unfreezing deeply held attitudes and beliefs" (Hoekman et al., 2019, p. 620). Having shared leadership processes in place would enable their voices to have a platform to contribute to the future direction of the organization. The idea of engaging local voices is far from new. In their study of SFD programs in divided communities, Schulenkorf and Sugden (2011) discovered that local stakeholders place a significant value on the importance of engaging local actors in leadership roles and as role models for others. Early and frequent engagement of participants and other internal stakeholders in decision-making processes related to the design, implementation, and evaluation of SFD programs is vital for cultural and locally relevant solutions (Meir, 2017; Wegner et al., 2020). For these reasons, we extend the argument that shared leadership presents a viable form of leadership for the SFD field (Jones et al., 2018; Kang &

Svensson, 2019; Svensson et al., 2019).

Another key contribution from our analysis is the strong empirical support for the relationship between servant and shared leadership. There is encouraging evidence in prior literature that servant leadership is practiced across a variety of SFD organizations (Welty Peachey et al., 2018). For example, Svensson and Seifried (2017) found evidence of servant leadership among leaders of SFD hybrids particularly with a focus on investing time and resources in people and taking the necessary actions to cultivate an authentic and inclusive workplace. But what about other practitioners who want to learn and develop new leadership skills to better serve their constituents? Unfortunately, professional development opportunities remain scarce despite the significant demand for work-related training in the SFD space (Shin et al., 2020; Welty Peachey et al., 2020; Whitley et al., 2019). SFD funders, network organizations, universities, and other support agencies can help address these issues by developing more targeted capacity-building efforts for SFD leaders, including servant and shared leadership practices. It is, therefore, encouraging that some funders are pushing for a move toward bottom-up, collaborative, and learning-oriented efforts to help build the capacity among recipients to "effectively and sustainably manage their interventions" (Whitley et al., 2020, p. 29).

To stimulate shared leadership development, SFD leaders should embrace a growth mindset while showing a committment to employee growth and promoting a culture of responsibility and autonomy (Pearce et al., 2008). These actions should include empowering staff members to take ownership and encouraging staff to learn from their own mistakes. Previous research suggests vertical leadership styles, such as servant leadership, which provide employees autonomy related to decision-making can help facilitate the development of shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013). Although direct interactions with leaders play an important role in this process, it is important to remember that shared leadership is also driven by a strong organizational culture that reinforces values of respect and empowerment (Fausing et al., 2015). From this perspective, empowering employees should not only be viewed as an important aspect of servant leadership, but also critical to building a foundation for shared leadership.

CONCLUSION

The importance of leadership within SFD organizations is recognized within both research and practice (Shin et al., 2020). The extant SFD literature is characterized by close examinations of specific leadership styles and broader analyses of how leadership facilitates key organizational processes (i.e., organizational capacity, innovation). Although the results have collectively highlighted the efficacy of different leadership styles in the SFD context, there remains a pressing need to understand leadership development (Schulenkorf, 2017). The findings of this study provide empirical support for the association between servant and shared leadership, which represent two promising approaches highlighted in prior literature. Though the association has received conceptual and theoretical support in prior studies, this study is the first to empirically test (and find evidence for) this link in SFD.

Mainstream leadership scholars have suggested that vertical leadership styles play an important role in building an internal environment conducive to shared leadership (e.g., Fausing et al., 2015). Our results have important theoretical implications for leadership in SFD by positioning servant leadership as a viable approach for implementing vertical leadership in a way that establishes a vision of altruism, humility, love, acceptance, stewardship, and emotional connections enabling an environment conducive to shared leadership development. The growing body of literature on servant leadership has found significant relationships with a wide range of employee outcomes including improved health, growth, learning, autonomy, sense of purpose, and engagement (Hunter et al., 2013; van Dierendonck et al., 2014). The ability of leaders to inspire and empower others is particularly important in community-based organizations given the value-based motives of their internal stakeholders (do Nascimento et al., 2018). Taken together, the empowering nature of servant leadership can therefore facilitate the development of shared leadership through an improved sense of responsibility and collective decision-making (Carson et al., 2007; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2013). Additional conceptual work is necessary to further theorize the role of servant leadership in shared leadership development.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of the current study should be considered in light of several limitations. First, the unique focus of this study meant that only 100 of the 215 completed surveys could be utilized for analysis, which represents a relatively small convenience sample of SFD organizations currently in operation. A larger and more representative sample of SFD organizations would allow for more robust analysis of contextual and organizational variations in the relationship between servant and shared leadership. Second, while cross-sectional surveys provide appropriate data to assess this relationship, the growing emphasis on innovative and participant-driven thinking in SFD practice (e.g., Joachim et

al., 2020; Jones et al., 2020) warrants diverse methodological approaches that capture how and when different forms of leadership stimulate and support behavior. Future studies should consider case study and ethnographic methods based on extended fieldwork to provide rich, longitudinal insight into how servant and shared leadership dynamics manifest in SFD contexts. Additionally, though prior research suggests servant and shared leadership represent two of the most viable leadership styles within SFD organizations, there are other approaches that warrant ongoing inquiry, particularly as the field continues to evolve. As Welty Peachey (2019) stated, it is imperative that the SFD community continues "pushing forward conversations about what effective leadership could or should look like in [SFD]" (p. 248). Future researchers are also encouraged to explore leadership across SFD organizations in different geographical contexts and should explore local perspectives on the most meaningful leadership approaches. Our research note contributes to this scholarly dialogue by providing empirical support for the link between servant and shared leadership in SFD, which we hope stimulates additional studies on other leadership styles such as authentic, empowering, and transformational leadership, as well as non-Western leadership styles, and their potential role in the development of shared leadership.

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Original Research

Health interventions as vehicles for increased sport participation for women and girls: Socio-managerial insights from a Netball-for-Development Program in Tonga

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ABSTRACT

Against the background of ever-rising non-communicable disease rates, an area that has received increased attention from sport-for-development practitioners and academics is sport-for-health (SFH). SFH projects attempt to contribute to the development of healthy lifestyle behavior and physically active societies through sport-related programs and interventions. The purpose of this paper was to explore the socio-managerial challenges and opportunities of a netball-based SFH program in Tonga. Based on local focus group and interview data, findings were grouped under five overarching themes: strategic management of volunteer network, sociocultural barriers, public space management, events and tournaments as incentives, and collaboration across local and national sports. In discussing these findings in context, we provide implications for managing culturally sensitive SFH projects in the Pacific region and beyond.

Health Interventions as Vehicles for Increased Sport Participation for Women and Girls: Socio-Managerial Insights from a Netball-for-Development Program in Tonga

The field of sport-for-development (SFD) has witnessed significant growth and diversification over the past 15 years. Around the world, sport-based development programs are staged to contribute to a range of positive social, cultural, educational, psychological, physical, and economic change, especially in disadvantaged communities (Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Given the alarming prevalence of ever-growing non-communicable disease (NCD) rates on a global scale (Bennett et al., 2018), one area that has been receiving increased attention from academics and practitioners is sport-for-health (SFH). SFH projects attempt to contribute to the promotion and development of healthy lifestyles and a physically active society through specifically designed and targeted sport and sport-related interventions; as such, SFH is conceptualized as a distinct subsection of SFD work (see Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019).

In a health promotion context, SFH interventions are also growing in popularity. Sport is recognized as a dynamic vehicle to promote public health messages, as well as to positively shape attitudes toward physical activity (PA: Eime et al., 2008; Garnham-Lee et al., 2016). Although the outcomes of targeted SFH projects have been documented in the past (e.g., Dalton et al., 2015; Richards et al., 2014; Siefken, Schofield, & Malcata, 2014), less is known about the setup and socio-managerial factors that underpin the strategic implementation of SFH initiatives. For instance, critical questions around project design, delivery and leverage, as well as the collaboration of program partners in culturally distinct contexts, deserve to be explored in much greater detail (Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2018).

Keywords: sport-for-development; health management; physical activity; sustained engagement; Pacific Islands

Against this background, the purpose of this paper was to explore the socio-managerial challenges and opportunities of a netball-based SFH program for physically inactive women and girls in the Kingdom of Tonga. The country has one of the highest rates of obesity and NCDs in the world (Kessaram et al., 2015; Watson & Teanor, 2016). Conservative estimates indicate that physical inactivity is responsible for 11.2% of all-cause mortality in Tonga and causes 6.9% of coronary heart disease, 8.6% of type 2 diabetes, 13.5% of breast cancer, and 12.4% of colon cancer (Lee et al., 2012). PA undertaken during leisure time, including sport, is particularly important in reducing the burden of NCDs, but the effectiveness of sport interventions will depend on the implementation of several strategies to increase their cultural relevance (Conn et al., 2013; Schulenkorf, 2017). By discussing the thematic findings of our qualitative investigation, we strive to contribute to a better understanding of culturally sensitive management approaches to SFH and highlight implications for the design and implementation of future interventions across the Pacific and beyond.

Literature Review

To establish the relevant theoretical background for our empirical SFH study, in this section we provide a brief overview of the areas of health, PA, sport, and SFD, which are inextricably bound. In other words, in SFH different actors from various fields of society are working together to contribute to a healthy and prosperous population (Edwards & Rowe, 2019; Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019). They do so with the understanding that health is a multidimensional concept that combines three distinct but interrelated dimensions: (a) physical health, characterized by the absence of physical disease and having the energy to perform daily tasks (including activities of moderate to vigorous intensity); (b) mental health, characterized by the absence of mental disorders and having the ability to negotiate daily challenges and social interactions in life without major issues; and (c) social health, the ability to interact with other people in the social environment and to engage in satisfying personal relationships (WHO, 1948).

From a physical health perspective, regular PA is associated with benefits such as reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis (Haskell et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2012). Epidemiological research further suggests that regular PA can also positively influence individuals' mental and psychosocial status, including improvement of mood (Ströhle, 2009) and a reduction of symptoms related to depression, anxiety, and emotional distress (Schuch, Vancampfort, Richards, et al., 2016; Schuch, Vancampfort, Rosenbaum, et al., 2016). Finally, from a social perspective, PA has been shown to foster the development of new networks; build local skills, knowledge, and resources; facilitate civic participation and social capital; and improve integration, inclusion and cohesion in community settings (Bailey, 2005; Edwards, 2015; Spaaij, 2012).

Although the use of sporting activities as vehicles for development is not a new phenomenon, the intentional implementation of sport for non-sporting outcomes has been a more recent but fast-growing area of focus, classified as SFD (Richards et al., 2013). In recent years, research across all thematic areas of SFD has experienced significant development (Schulenkorf et al., 2016); however, investigations in the health-focused subset of SFD—namely SFH—have yet to receive the scholarly attention they deserve. Specifically, aspects of health development, including the improvement of PA, have largely been taken for granted or seen as a welcome by-product of many sport-focused development programs. Instead, we argue that a specific emphasis on health, including its physical, social, and mental dimensions, is critical to design programs that are specific, targeted, and focused on delivering desired health benefits for those who are most at-risk (Lubans et al., 2011). If that can be achieved, sport has the potential to make an efficient and cost-effective contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal #3, that is to ensure healthy lives and wellbeing for all ages (Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019).

While SFH initiatives have not yet received the attention that social or educational focused SFD programs have enjoyed, there are a number of projects and initiatives that deserve to be highlighted. For instance, different SFH programs have been implemented in the Pacific Islands, including the Basketball development project Hoops for Health (across Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, and the Solomon Islands), which aims to encourage healthy lifestyle choices through strategic basketball sessions that are coupled with educational resources on (un)healthy lifestyle behavior (cf., FIBA Oceania, 2021). Another example is the Wokabaot Jalens in Vanuatu—a culturally-cantered, research-based health development intervention with the aim to reduce participants' NCD risk factors, specifically by raising PA levels and improving healthy eating behaviors in female civil servants (Siefken et al., 2015). Finally, the Volley4Change program has targeted Pacific adolescents with the aim of reducing their chances of developing NCDs by playing volleyball and engaging in nutritional awareness classes and health checks in clinical settings (Cohen et al., 2019).

On the macro and meso levels—and focused more specifically on a health promotion and awareness building -

some critical projects and campaigns should be acknowledged. Although not all of these are labelled specifically as SFH initiatives, they have the same purpose of making a distinct contribution to the Sustainable Development Goal #3. UNICEF, for example, has previously used sport and sport stars to raise awareness on the importance of immunizations for public health, including the use of organized sport events as a vehicle for advancing vaccination campaigns in Zambia against measles (UNICEF, 2003). More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of large sporting organizations including FIFA engaged with UN-bodies such as the World Health Organization to collaboratively promote healthy lifestyles through football with the underlying message to be #HealthyAtHome (PAHO, 2020).

The abovementioned examples indicate that for SFH programs to be impactful, collaboration and managerial know-how present critical ingredients. In fact, without adequate planning, design or implementation SFH projects may not result in the desired health outcomes or risk having unintended negative impacts on the participants (Schulenkorf, 2017). For instance, an SFH initiative aimed at improving the mental health of adolescents in post-conflict Uganda ended up having a negative impact on the participants due to program components that lacked adaptation and effective planning and implementation (Richards et al., 2014; Richards & Foster, 2014). Taking such challenges into account, the guest editors of a recently published special issue on "Managing Sport for Health" in the journal Sport Management Review highlighted that sport needs to be aligned with community needs and should be empowering, sport should be adaptable and evolving to ensure it values health, and sport organizations should ensure partnerships for health to promote organizational sustainability (Edwards & Rowe, 2019).

Despite the abovementioned theoretical and conceptual advancements and a number of recent case study analyses on SFH outcomes, there remains a distinct lack of empirical research on the managerial challenges and opportunities, including critical questions around SFH project design, delivery, and leverage, as well as the collaboration of program partners in culturally distinct contexts (Schulenkorf, 2010, 2017). The lack of empirical research is particularly relevant for work in low- and middle-income settings, including the geographically remote and culturally diverse South Pacific region, where SFH programs have been implemented for years but where socio-managerial research on SFH projects remains scarce (for notable exceptions, see: Keane et al., 2020; Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014; Seal & Sherry, 2018). With this study, we aim to contribute to filling this research gap by providing empirical findings from a netball-based SFH initiative in the Kingdom of Tonga. As such, the present study explores the socio-managerial aspects that underpinned the initiative and it presents the lessons learnt that may well inform the design and delivery of future SFH programs in similar contexts. Here, our qualitative investigation builds on previously conducted research that has highlighted the success of the program in achieving desired health and participation outcomes (a snapshot of results is presented in the Findings section).

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Pacific Islands/Tongan Context

The Pacific Island countries comprise 23 nations and territories spread over more than 25,000 islands and islets in the Pacific Ocean (Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2018). The Pacific Island countries are home to 10 million people whose lifestyle was traditionally characterized by the consumption of seafood, fresh local food, and high levels of PA behavior (Coyne, 1984). Since the 1950s, however, the average lifestyle of Pacific islanders has changed dramatically. From a dietary perspective, fresh local produce was replaced by largely processed imported food (Snowdon et al., 2010; Thow et al., 2011). From an activity perspective, physical labor was replaced by electronic machines while sedentary occupations and the use of motorized transport contributed to a significant reduction of people's habitual PA levels (Coyne, 1984; Englberger et al., 1999; WHO, 2008).

As a result of these changes, the levels of obesity and NCD prevalence have increased significantly. Tonga is performing particularly poorly from a public health perspective. Kessaram et al. (2015) highlighted that 60% of men and more than 70% of women in Tonga are obese, placing Tonga as one of the most obese nations in the world. In an attempt to address the issue, different health interventions including SFH initiatives have been implemented in Tonga. They form part of a wider movement aimed at improving community well-being and promoting healthier lifestyles in the region. In this study, we focus on a specific netball-based SFH intervention, the Netball Outreach Program (NOP), which was designed to increase sport participation in communities with traditionally low levels of engagement in PA, and to improve physical, social, and mental health outcomes for those involved.

The SFH Initiative: Design, Implementation, and Delivery

Between 2012 and 2015, netball had been utilized as a method of health promotion and NCD prevention in Tonga via the Kau Mai Tonga (KMT) initiative, an annual 6-week mass media campaign that focused on delivering messages to increase women's and girls' knowledge about the health risk of being physically inactive, and improve attitudes toward women engaging in PA (Sherry et al., 2017). In a country where sport and PA opportunities are traditionally designed for and dominated by men (Turk et al. 2013), the KMT initiative aimed to promote both small-scale community programs but also larger netball tournaments for women across the country.

For a number of reasons, netball was purposefully chosen by the Tongan Government via the KMT initiative: (a) it had sufficient similarities with the traditional game of basketbola, (b) it could readily utilize the established community infrastructure of courts or open spaces, and (c) the sport had a level of visibility via the professional netball competitions in Australia and New Zealand that were broadcast on Tongan television. Apart from the similarities, netball was also sufficiently different to generate a level of excitement and novelty for community members. Previous research on the KMT initiative had demonstrated the utility of netball as a vehicle to improve the health of women and girls and over the years women's involvement in sport became increasingly accepted within Tongan culture (Sherry et al., 2017; Turk et al., 2013). However, initiatives had largely been concentrated in the urban areas of the main island of Tonga'tapu. In an attempt to broaden the scope and impact of the original program, TNA, in partnership with the research team, identified a number of remote villages as locations for the NOP as a targeted netball-based SFH initiative. The specific rationale for targeting these villages was to motivate physically inactive women and girls to participate in a new and different form of PA, and to leverage the earlier success of KMT. The rural focus of this study was also informed by international evidence that indicates the level and type of PA varies according to urbanicity and the level of socio-economic development. Specifically, in low- and middle-income countries such as Tonga, leisure-time PA makes a relatively small contribution to overall PA levels (Strain et al. 2020). This is thought to be further accentuated in rural settings, where organized recreational PA opportunities are typically more limited. Overall, given the emerging evidence on the distinct importance of leisure time PA for both physical and mental health (Teychenne et al., 2020), this study focused on intervening in the rural Tongan population with the lowest previous exposure to organized recreational physical activity opportunities.

Selection of Netball Outreach Program Sites

At the outset, the research team worked with the TNA staff to identify appropriate intervention villages using selection criteria that were developed by local TNA staff: remote villages, low in current sporting uptake, and likely to respond to a netball intervention which included developing local "champions" (i.e., expected early adopters). Low-uptake villages were identified specifically as those villages with (a) no established contact person coordinating netball activities in village, (b) no trained netball coaches/umpires in village, (c) no functioning netball infrastructure/equipment available in village, (d) no netball teams from village currently participating in regular adult tournaments, and (e) any netball players playing on teams from neighboring villages or towns. Across Tonga'tapu, 10 low-uptake villages were selected and subsequently resourced by TNA to participate in the NOP. Importantly, at the initial formative consultations, members of target communities expressed a genuine interest in participating in netball—something that had been previously thwarted by limited resources and capacity.

Planning and Preparation

One member of the research team provided expert advice and assistance with program design, helping to formulate a specific netball-based SFH intervention that complemented existing initiatives being delivered in Tonga. Specifically, to facilitate the implementation of the NOP program, a number of integrated management processes were undertaken across a 6-month period in 2016. First, in line with Tongan protocol, TNA contacted the Ministry of Internal Affairs to identify and facilitate contact with the town officers for each of the 10 intervention villages. The town officers are the key point of contact for each village, similar to mayors in other contexts. Concurrent with this process, initial planning meetings were conducted with TNA staff and other local stakeholders to identify sport management challenges, cultural peculiarities and facilitators/barriers to netball participation.

Following liaison with and approval from the town officers, the TNA program manager identified a volunteer village champion (VVC) for each of the targeted intervention villages. The VVCs were selected and recruited primarily through their involvement with TNA as volunteers. All of them were female, aged between 18 and 45. It is important to note that all VVCs were not formally employed; some lived in their own intervention villages, while others lived in Nuku'alofa (Tonga's capital city) and had to travel to their

project site to promote netball and the NOP program. Finally, the creation and maintenance of netball courts—some of which were far away from the village center—was undertaken by TNA staff with the assistance from the relevant VVCs and volunteer netball leaders in each village.

Netball Program Intervention Delivery

Once the NOP program was designed and all preparatory work was completed, program promotion commenced in the 10 intervention villages. This promotion was primarily led by VVCs with direct support from the TNA program manager. It was conducted in an informal way and the recruitment of players was supported by word-of-mouth processes and an open-door policy during regular netball trainings at each newly created netball court. NOP sessions comprised of one to two hours of continuous netball activity in the villages, with each participant playing for approximately 20 to 30 minutes. There were two organized training sessions per week—one for children, one for adults—and most villages had 20 to 30 people attending each session after approximately six months' time.

As the program developed, VVCs also worked with their local community health services, such as community nurses, to offer regular health checks and Body Mass Index measures. After the first six months, a progress meeting was held with the VVCs at the TNA office to follow up on village progress and challenges. Dates and requirements for upcoming events were discussed, such as a sport carnival for women's teams was organized as a 1-day social competition in a central location. TNA provided fundraising support to generate sufficient money for the transportation of village teams in an attempt to overcome financial barriers to participation. As a subsequent initiative, a round-robin series of mini-competitions was developed with teams travelling to three different locations: Houma in the east, Ha'asini in the west, and Atele in the central region.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND PROCESSES

For this 18 month research project, we employed a case study methodology that featured a mixed-method approach with three phases of quantitative data collection and one phase of qualitative data collection. Although the quantitative studies focused on personal, social and environmental mediators as well as the link between program participation and increased PA levels (Keane et al., 2020; Richards et al., 2016), the qualitative investigation presented in this paper thematically explored the socio-managerial challenges and opportunities of the NOP program. Our qualitative research was underpinned by an interpretive mode of inquiry, which suggests that access to reality can be socially constructed through language, consciousness and shared meanings (Glesne, 1999; Neuman, 2013). Interpretive research acknowledges that data are analyzed through a process of induction, which means that meaning is constructed and reconstructed based on the realities of participants. In other words, interpretive studies aim to understand the context of a phenomenon through the meanings that people assign to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

As noted earlier, the present study is supported by literature from health, physical activity and SFD and although no formal theoretical framework was adopted, both the focus group and interview questions were informed by research on socio-managerial aspects of SFD (i.e., mechanisms for change using sport as a development tool), and SFH (i.e., physical activity and behavior change) literature. A total of 14 focus groups were conducted in nine out of the 10 Tongan villages during a two-week in-country research visit in April 2017, around four months after the commencement of the program. The focus groups lasted an average of 60 minutes and took place in a location in their village that was convenient to the participants (e.g., church hall). The village that missed out on our research was involved in a mourning process and sociocultural etiquette suggested that it was not appropriate to interact with village members during this time. In the other villages, focus groups included a balanced number of participants and those tasked with the delivery and management of the program, either TNA staff or VVCs. The combination of participants and those in charge of the delivery or management of the program served the purpose of undertaking a 360-degree reflection on people's experiences, including a reflection on the program's successes, failures, and identification of opportunities for improvement. In total, 57 females were involved in the focus groups, aged between 16 and 55 years old. The women were from rural settings with lower sociodemographic profiles and their lives comprised primarily of caring for their families, subsistence farming, and limited access to recreational physical activity opportunities.

Focus groups were chosen because they can help achieve a greater understanding of a previously vague phenomenon, as participants are likely to express opinions and ideas more openly in a group setting (Veal, 2006). This is particularly relevant in societies where socializing in groups plays a significant role in everyday life, including in sporting contexts (Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014). Our focus group questions centered on the managerial opportunities and challenges for program implementation and growth; the perceived benefits of netball engagement; barriers and facilitators to individual participation; peer and

community perception of PA and netball; support provided by the TNA and program partners; and opportunities for the future delivery of the program. It should be noted that the present study draws primarily on the reflections on the setup, management and implementation of the program, including opportunities and challenges for collaboration, engagement and support. Finally, nine individual interviews were conducted with village-level volunteers and TNA staff to further explain and contextualize focus group findings with those specifically involved in managerial positions. Again, interviews were conducted in a community setting that was convenient to the participants and the intention was to gain a deeper understanding of all aspects of program delivery and organization.

The qualitative data analysis undertaken followed the descriptive, interpretive and pattern coding as set out by Miles et al. (2014). In other words, as researchers we were mainly focused on eliciting emerging themes from the data that were relevant to the NOP program. From a process perspective, systematic inductive coding was employed which included a broad read-through, a search for recurring concepts and patterns, and the grouping of recurring concepts and patterns into themes. Here, two members of the research team coded the complete data set before the team engaged in a process of cross-checking information to ensure consistency and credibility of our thematic findings. This process further assisted in making sure that key messages and themes were indeed representative of the data transcripts (Patton, 2015). Overall, our analysis resulted in numerous codes which were collapsed into five key themes which are highlighted in our Findings and Discussion section. We wish to acknowledge that the research team included four international scholars and one local member; importantly, all those involved with the data collection and analysis have had many years of engagement with the SFD and SFH sectors in the Pacific Islands region, both in practice and in research. As such, we were confident that our combined expertise was a supporting factor during the inductive data analysis process.

At the same time, we need to also acknowledge the "outsider status" of the international research team members as a limitation of our empirical study. We aimed to mitigate this challenge as much as possible, especially through close engagement with the local management team and their social and cultural support during community meetings and research sessions. This also included the collaboration with a local translator who provided assistance during interviews and focus groups with a handful of individuals who preferred to engage in discussions in their local Tongan language. Finally, our study was approved by the La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee (13-073) and the Tonga National Health Ethics and Research Committee (190315.5). Approval was also granted by the Tonga Netball Association and community leaders in the participating villages. All participants were provided with information about the research and they provided informed consent prior to data collection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of our study was to explore the socio-managerial challenges and opportunities of a netball-based SFH program in low-uptake villages in Tonga. In this section, we outline and discuss key findings under the five themes identified: strategic management of volunteer network, sociocultural barriers, public space management, events and tournaments as incentives, and collaboration across local and national sports. We present our findings against the background of previously conducted health outcome evaluations of the initiative (Keane et al 2020). Although these do not present the main focus of our paper, the following snapshot of key quantitative results is important to highlight a number of encouraging outcomes that have started to emerge as a result of the positive uptake of netball activities.

Snapshot of Program Outcome Evaluations

The quantitative results demonstrated the impact of the program on netball participation and the volume of leisure-time PA. First, when reviewing netball participation, there was a large increase in the mean frequency of participation each week from baseline (0.2 time per week) to 6 months follow-up (4.1 times per week). Second, there was also a large increase in the mean duration of leisure-time PA from baseline (18 minutes) to the 6 months follow-up (421 minutes). These improvements were underpinned by positive changes in numerous personal, social and environmental mediating factors (for further detail, see: Keane et al 2020). This suggests that with appropriate resources and local support, it is possible to achieve desired program outcomes and although the sustainability of impacts remains to be assessed in follow-up studies, these encouraging results led us to investigate and understand some of the managerial aspects that led to—or underpinned—the program.

Strategic Management of Volunteer Network

A key emerging theme was the importance of developing a local volunteer network to foster local community engagement. Specifically, TNA had been able to establish a vital network of over 30 women across all areas of Tonga'tapu who regularly volunteered at TNA-organized

tournaments as umpires and referees, attempted to stimulate netball participation in their villages, participated in TNA netball activities, and attended TNA tournaments to assist paid staff with operational tasks. Rather than acting independently from one another, these individuals perceived themselves to be part of a wider "netball community" that created a shared sense of identity and belonging. In fact, this shared sense of belonging fostered their ongoing commitment and drive to improve netball participation in their villages, as one VVC stated, "It kind of makes me feel like a part of something—like a family, and you don't want to lose it. I see the passion that everybody works with and it means that I work hard, too."

Members of the volunteer network actively engaged in the development and fine-tuning of the NOP program across the 10 villages, as such—and under the leadership of local VCCs—volunteers enjoyed a level of freedom when working with the local community to achieve the best outcomes in culturally appropriate ways. In other words, through partnerships with village members VCCs and their supporters were able to increase opportunities for cooperation and support, which benefited the uptake of PA and improved netball capacity across villages. This was highlighted by one TNA staff member:

I think it all comes down to the volunteers. If you do more, then you know what that village needs and you can do what they want, and you can make sure that more people get involved and receive the training. If people don't go out and engage people from the village, then teams won't get together and opportunities are lost.

In all villages across the intervention, the VVCs were personally committed to the program and its goals. They were dedicated to trying to improve netball participation and get people in their communities active, particularly women and girls. This commitment and the growing volunteer network resulted in the development of a "social sport system" at the village and regional level, which was clearly targeted to those who would benefit most from a dedicated SFH initiative. In fact, this strategic and committed focus on "for-health" proved to be a critical success factor—something that the organizers of many previous social sport initiatives have struggled to achieve, as they focused too much on traditional sport development outcomes or had an insufficiently engaged and/or appropriated skilled volunteer workforce (Chawansky, 2021; Clutterbuck & Doherty, 2019; Giulianotti et al., 2021). In other words, although previous SFD programs have at times struggled to avoid a "mission drift" by attracting already sports-minded or active sportspeople (e.g., Raw et al., 2021), the NOP program through its locally embedded volunteer network managed to stay on path to secure participation from largely inactive members of Tongan society.

In rural Tonga, the VVCs acted as important local change agents; they were trusted by the community and had the ability to actively and meaningfully encourage others to participate—qualities that external change agents would not necessarily possess. In building on Schulenkorf's (2010, 2012) argument that external change agents are significant initiators of many SFD projects, we contest that this netball program would not have been established or developed successfully without committed internal change agents working across all stages of the program. The initial design of the NOP initiative was externally supported by an expert member of the research team (bringing expertise in health and PA) and the Netball Australia program manager (bringing expertise in netball and funding). Still, local change agents played a central role in co-starting the program and contributing to its development and growth across villages. From a management perspective, the engagement between external and internal change agents followed the principles of Schulenkorf's (2010) model for community empowerment. At the beginning of the initiative, external change agents did yet have a significant degree of control but the responsibility and ownership of the program progressively shifted towards the local TNA and VCCs who eventually managed the NOP without external influence. Success in transferring ownership to local organizers is an all-but-certain outcome in the world of SFD and international development more widely (Schulenkorf, Sugden, & Burdsey, 2014; Wallis & Lambert, 2014). In the case of the NOP, success was built on the local commitment of the national sporting body, the carefully and strategically selected VCCs, and the close network that was jointly formed with local communities.

Sociocultural Barriers

The island nation of Tonga provides a unique geographical and sociocultural context. On the main island Tonga'tapu, there are 36 towns and villages that have distinct value systems and community identities. The focus groups highlighted the importance of recognizing the facilitators and barriers to PA in each specific locality. These went beyond the well-established challenges of establishing and sustaining organized sport interventions in rural communities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. For example, during the first phase of implementation, netball posts and courts were built in each village to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure was available. However, in one location, community members removed the netball posts from the field of play. TNA staff

members later revealed that this particular village identified as a "soccer village" and community members were simply not open to engaging with a new sport.

We previously described the efficacy of working with local volunteers to understand sociocultural nuances and tailor interventions. In this case, local knowledge was consulted and hence, the subsequent rejection from parts of the wider community came somewhat unexpected. As such, this example demonstrates that while listening to a range of local voices in each village community is important, the community engagement process is often incredibly complex and easier said than done. In this case, discussions with village members—and especially those with no interest in sport—may not have been detailed or varied enough. But perhaps this example speaks more to the imperfect nature of community engagement processes per se, which are bound to result in sociocultural challenges when questions of preference, identity and tradition are at play (Sugden, 2010). In our case, the varied reactions to netball highlight that even on a small island such as Tonga'tapu, there are distinct differences in beliefs and social norms across villages and regions, even if they are only a few kilometers apart.

Another socio-cultural challenge was identified around female participation in sport. In Tongan society, women are largely responsible for childcare and domestic duties—something that has previously been highlighted as a barrier to sport and PA in the Pacific region (Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014; Turk et al., 2013). In the context of the NOP initiative, attending to household and childcare duties was frequently discussed as a challenge to netball participation, as one local player shared:

I started playing netball at school but I have a child now, so I stopped playing because there is no one to look after the children if I play. Sometimes I can play if I can bring my children along.

Another participant stated, "I choose to not play netball because I have many children, so there is no one to take care of them. . . . I want to play netball but the kids make it too difficult."

Finding a solution to this cultural barrier seemed difficult but two suggestions were made. Firstly, volunteer-based community arrangements for child supervision could provide an effective means to allow mothers to participate. If funding for such an initiative cannot be provided, a "player community" may share the responsibility of child minding around the courts. And second, it was suggested that targeted promotions highlighting the need for mothers to be physically active and healthy may assist in changing stereotypes, especially if they are directed at the women's husbands. In fact, it was strongly emphasized that negative sociocultural attitudes towards women's sport critically impacted netball engagement and here, support of husbands was perceived the most critical factor for positive change. One netball participant stated:

There are challenges to get women to play, as they have husbands and kids. It is so much easier for married ladies with supportive husbands. There is a lady in our netball [team] and the husband didn't support her and every time we called her to come, she really wanted to join in, but the husband said no.

In line with previous sport management and SFD research (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011; Sherry et al., 2017), this finding highlights the need for bespoke programming that is considerate of local realities. As a female-focused program, it is critical to set aside a safe and supportive space for women that facilitates opportunities for regular sport and activity (Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014). Including 'significant others' in this process is also critical, even though cultural norms are slow to change (Hayhurst, 2013). Overall, it is imperative to have a strong knowledge of the target group and consider local circumstances when developing and implementing tailored SFH programs.

Public Space Management

To foster participation in each village, netball courts were set up in open community spaces. These spaces were all grass-based and court line markings were made using petrol. During focus group sessions, it was apparent that the location of the netball court was an important factor for engagement. In the villages of Fatumu, Fua'amotu, Ha'alalo, and Kanokupolu the netball courts were centrally located, which assisted in showcasing the sport to the wider community. The importance of accessibility and visibility was highlighted by one VVC:

At the start, there were only a few people, but then it started to grow and more people came to play. It developed from the number of players each day and people could see others were getting involved. We started off with two teams and then it developed and we then had three teams because the court is visible in the village.

Another VVC stated:

If we train here on the court, the neighbors are all sitting around watching, which is good. I invited the next village team to training, so we had a game and they sit around the

court and watch. It gets the community involved and helps people to see netball.

Creating a netball court in the center of the community was critical in the context of creating an accessible, supportive environment and potentially challenging structural barriers and normative assumptions about female sport participation. The village of Liahona provides a strong case example, highlighting the challenges when the court location is less than ideal. In this village, the netball court was a 10-minute walk from the main community hub. Participants suggested that this distance was perceived as too far away. Although some women simply decided not to participate, other community members would wait to be driven to the court. One participant stated:

The court needs to move because the court was on the other side of the village and … it is too far to walk there. We don't often go to the other part of the village… and so the location of the court makes a difference in how motivated people are to play.

Perceptions such as these must not be ignored. In fact, they are important considerations for sport managers, as they are reflective of wider sociocultural norms and realities in which extreme sedentary lifestyles prevail (Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014). In other words, it remains a challenge for SFH programmers to find the right balance between providing suitable program locations and active transport on the one hand, and to encourage walking and the changing of norms around PA on the other. This is further complicated by the concept of providing a safe and inclusive space for women to play (Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014). Some women may feel shy and self-conscious in a highly visible space; others may feel that their participation could lead to their husband's discomfort with them being physically active in public (Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014). Here, questions around space management and socio-cultural challenges come together and provide critical challenges for SFH mangers.

In addition to choosing the right location for netball courts, an associated managerial challenge relates to their ongoing maintenance. In Tonga, there are limited government resources dedicated to the management and maintenance of public spaces at the village level. The TNA—with its limited budget—was unable to cover the cost of cutting the grass and purchasing petrol to sustain line markings. For example, in the village of Fua'amotu, one VVC explained the process for maintaining a netball court:

We have to cut the grass. My husband is in the army and he is cutting the grass, so he is coming to do the grass and then go[es] back to work. [Unfortunately], there is no one else to cut the grass and I am asking him to come and do it.

In an attempt to generate funding for court maintenance, local participants took matters in their own hands. A TNA staff member commented, "They [participants] go around houses and sweep the rubbish for people who give them money. So, the more engaged villages will be proactive in these ways to improve their netball resources." This comment highlights the responsibility placed on villages and volunteers to support and maintain their playing spaces. This is particularly important given that inadequate spaces often constrain participation, as one VVC explained, "There is no netball at the moment because the grass is too long. It needs to be cut for people can play on it and so it is easier to run. We need money to do this."

From a management perspective, it is essential to ensure there are resources and sustainable processes in place to maintain adequate and safe playing facilities (Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019). In fact, these challenges represent a significant barrier for many small-scale SFH programs that are implemented in low-income settings such as Tonga. Moreover, the lack of court maintenance can have a negative impact on the perception of program quality, as well as subsequent participation rates and the image of sport organizations such as TNA (Cavnar et al, 2014). Hence, it is imperative for sport managers to not only look at the micro levels when planning SFH projects, but to also account for a wider service approach toward leisure and recreation at the meso and macro levels. In other words, to secure financial resources and leverage political support, strategic partnerships and long-term engagements with governmental department and offices are critical, including those responsible for sport, health, social services, community development, women and so on.

Events and Tournaments as Incentives

As part of its strategy to promote and increase overall participation in netball, the TNA had previously offered special events and tournaments for women teams. For this, villages selected, prepared, and entered teams and entered into training sessions over several weeks in the lead-up to special events. However, straight after events were completed, netball engagement in the local villages decreased and people did not continue to use the netball courts regularly. In other words, unless there was an event that served as an incentive for participation (e.g., upcoming tournament), local women did not engage with netball or other forms of PA. At the same time, once an event was completed, "the job seemed to be done". This was reflected by one VVC:

They love playing in a tournament. But if we keep on training without aiming for a tournament, it's like nothing to them [the participants]. People aren't as bothered if there isn't a tournament, so to keep them training every day, we need more regular competitions.

Additionally, a local participant stated the following:

The one thing that would get people playing is donating free food and free drinks. That will get people there! That is a Tongan thing and if there were tournaments that had a prize, that would help to get people to play.

Previous research has identified the importance of including "highlight events" as part of regular SFD initiatives to keep up the excitement for participants (Schulenkorf, 2016; Schulenkorf & Adair, 2013). This was certainly the case in Tonga, where program participants were often motivated by extrinsic incentives, including an event or tournament but also the awarding of trophies or prize money. Considering the importance of regular PA in addressing health issues, the reliance on "events only" would not seem sufficient. Instead, we propose that the creation of an event portfolio or "mini leagues" could be advanced to foster regular competition at the village level, serving to sustain excitement and engagement in the SFH program. Ideally, such activities would also include adjacent health promotion campaigns and educational sessions in an attempt to leverage the projects under an SFH umbrella (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017).

Collaboration across local and national sports

In Tonga, the traditional sport for women and girls is "basketbola" which is a well-established game played in villages across the country, albeit primarily limited to the month of December around inter-village tournaments. The game has many similarities to netball: it is played on a netball-sized court, with netball hoops and a netball—and the only key differences are that there are nine players per side, rather than seven in netball, and that full contact is allowed when contesting for the ball. As noted earlier, the Tongan Government purposefully chose to engage with netball rather than the traditional sport of basketbola to provide a sense of novelty, and to leverage the visibility of the game for women and girls on Tongan television. Evidently, there were a number of practical and opportunistic reasons that contributed to the choice of netball, including aspects of funding, support, and the opportunity for regular, ongoing engagement. In a way, the locally supported decision to opt for netball rather than basketbola reflects a reality of decision-making in many disadvantaged community contexts where sport programs with national or international backing (e.g. basketball with Hoops for Life, volleyball with Volley4Change, or football with the Just Play program) provide intriguing alternatives for locals. In this context, we argue that the added focus on netball does not have to result in negative impacts or lower participation rates in basketbola. In fact, if community organizers and sport managers are working closely together, there may be opportunities for growth and leverage across the two sports which, in turn, could offer a more effective strategy towards achieving wider community health benefits.

Engaging in collaboration is not an easy task, however, even though the timing of events in Tonga would allow for netball and basketbola to co-exist. Tonga's large-scale, village-based basketbola tournament runs every December and hence, a VCC suggested that "if netball speaks to basketbola and works out a good way to offer the sports at different times, so they are not competing against each other for the same women". However, another VCC suggested there were cultural and sport-political barriers that impacted the game of netball to thrive in communities. He shared the following:

I do my best to get netball started here [in the village] and some of the women are changing their minds to support netball, but the village sport committee—they largely emphasize rugby and basketball, which makes it difficult to get people playing a new sport.

This statement suggests that although a strategic collaboration between a culturally embedded Indigenous sport and a newly introduced code such as netball could potentially lead to stronger and more sustained participation and health outcomes for the community, at times the reality on the ground presents a clash between culture and opportunity or tradition and innovation. A similar finding was previously shared by Khoo et al. (2014) regarding the engagement between cricket and kirikiti, the traditional form of cricket in the Pacific Island nation of Samoa. Here, sport-political and socio-managerial challenges needed to be addressed to allow for prosperous engagement between the two sports, which then allowed for growth and leverage of both the sport of cricket and its Indigenous version.

In the case of netball in Tonga, a further contributing barrier to people's involvement was the lack of knowledge of formal netball rules and game strategies. Despite the many similarities across the two sports, one netball participant shared, "We need help. We need someone to come and to give more information about the rules and help us know how to play; that would make it more enjoyable." Another one stated, "The number one sport in the village is

basketbola and the number two sport is volleyball. They [other village members] don't know the official rules of netball, so it isn't played as much as the other sports."

Overall, given these structural and cultural challenges, it was difficult for VCCs to organize formal netball sessions and ensure people could play according to the official netball rules. To be more effective in the future, it will come down to community leaders and TNA engaging in a collaboration that builds on newly established trust and focuses on the opportunities and cultural considerations when combining netball and basketbola in a meaningful way.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The use of targeted sport programs as vehicles for positive health outcomes has been an area of increasing focus for practitioners, researchers and policy developers. Our empirical investigation into TNA's NOP initiative provides a valuable case of a purposefully designed SFH intervention that uses the sport of netball for a largely inactive and disadvantaged group of people at risk of developing NCDs. Although the actual health benefits of the intervention have been reported elsewhere (Keane et al, 2020), in this study we elicited critical socio-managerial challenges and opportunities of the Tongan-based NOP program and provided implications for the design and delivery of future projects in the Pacific and beyond.

Overall, the NOP has demonstrated a strategic management focus in its purposeful design (i.e., intervention protocol designed via a partnership between locals and researchers experienced in both health and sport), implementation (e.g., selection of appropriate sites, provision of equipment), human resource management (e.g., engagement and training of volunteers; building capacity in program design and project management), and delivery (e.g., formation of local netball teams and newly introduced events) to facilitate sport and health outcomes. Here, the importance of a culturally appropriate program design cannot be understated, including genuine engagement with the community and awareness of the importance of providing safe and inclusive spaces to encourage participation.

Additionally, a clear focus on "what matters most" is critical to achieve desired SFH outcomes; in the Tongan context, this meant targeting low-engagement villages without established netball participation and a high risk of developing NCDs. In other words, if the aim of the program is to increase physical and social health for disadvantaged groups, then a catch-all sport program is likely to be less successful than an SFH initiative that is centered on those who are least engaged and most at risk. In fact, the purposeful framing of a program as SFH instead of SFD or sport development more generally, clearly signals that aspects of health take center stage in all features of the initiative. This, in turn, leads to important practical implications and managerial considerations across SFH design, promotion, implementation and leverage – something we expect future SFH research to explore in further breadth and depth.

Finally, the proven significance of local volunteers as change agents not only benefited the NOP initiative, their involvement also has implications for both sport management theory and practice. Our study has shown that the success of the program was not only built on strong and purposeful collaboration between local and external change agents at the beginning of the program; more significantly, an all-important empowerment process underpinned the initiative, including a deliberate transfer of program ownership to local sporting bodies, volunteers and players, as well as local villages and their members.

From a sport management perspective, the strategic combination of technical knowledge (provided by sport and health development experts) and cultural knowledge (provided by local experts and local communities) proved to be a critical success factor for achieving relevant, meaningful, and sustainable SFH project outcomes (Schulenkorf & Schlenker, 2017; Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014). Overall, this finding adds an important element to previous discussions on the relationship between external and local change agents, as it provides an argument for a shared engagement from the outset of an SFD program, rather than a reliance on external input as the driver of development (Schulenkorf, 2010; 2012). In the South Pacific region in particular, we conclude that strong partnerships between sport, health and development officials on the one hand, and local communities and their representatives (e.g., village chiefs, church leaders etc.) on the other, are of critical importance if lifestyle and behavior change initiatives are to reach individuals, families, and communities in a sustainable way.

Authors' contributions

Schulenkorf, Sherry and Richards contributed to conceptualising the study. Schulenkorf and Sherry led the qualitative study design, data collection and analysis while Richards led the quantitative study design, data collection and analysis. Tauhalaliku provided cultural guidance and critical input throughout all empirical work, including coordination of data collection and liaison with community leaders. All named authors contributed to the interpretation

of the findings. Schulenkorf and Siefken initially drafted the manuscript and all named authors provided editorial input to produce the submitted article.

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Original Research

A follow-up qualitative study: The lived experiences & perceptions of SDP trained youth sport coaches and teachers from Jordan and Tajikistan with using sports to foster a culture for peace

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ABSTRACT

Researchers interviewed 27 youth sport coaches and physical education teachers from Jordan and Tajikistan who previously participated in a sport for development and peace (SDP) train-the-trainer program. The purpose was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of participants and how they used sports activities in their positions of leadership to foster conditions that conceptually correspond to a culture of positive peace. Using an inductive-coding analysis, researchers identified two main dimensions discussed in this paper: (a) Changes in Everyday Lived Realities and (b) Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence. Participants mentioned changes in their attitudes and behaviors as well as in youth athletes' attitudes and behaviors on and off the field. New strategies involved peace education, conflict resolution skills, and lessons learned on the field. Findings from this study provide a better understanding of some of the lived experiences of sport coaches and physical education teachers as stakeholders promoting a positive peace years after being trained in SDP work. Implications of the present findings call for supporting SDP stakeholders' vital involvement in social initiatives that work to address both observable and unobservable factors which threaten to divide youth.

A FOLLOW-UP QUALITATIVE STUDY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES & PERCEPTIONS OF SDP TRAINED YOUTH SPORT COACHES AND TEACHERS FROM JORDAN AND TAJIKISTAN WITH USING SPORTS TO FOSTER A CULTURE FOR PEACE

Positive peace is a term coined by Galtung (1996) to refer to a desired social state between people in a relationship in which there is not only an absence of direct violence, but also the presence of conditions of justice, fairness, and equity in which integral human development can occur. A central notion of positive peace, as proposed by Galtung (1996), is the pursuit and promotion of peace by peaceful means. This aphorism primarily emphasizes the importance of cultivating nonviolent attitudes and building mutual relations through a radical respect for equal human rights (Grewel, 2003). By contrast, when there is an absence of overt or direct violence, but a persistence of structural or cultural violence, this can be called "negative peace". Negative peace involves actors who indirectly employ processes such as multilateralism, arms control, and war. Such processes may be effective in the short term, but in the long run only reproduce cultural and structural forms of violence (Levitt, 2014). To reduce structural, cultural, and direct forms of violence, and increase justice and peace in relationships, requires more than addressing an isolated incident of conflict through quick solutions or fixes. Instead actors involved in conflicts must become increasingly sensitive and motivated to look at what lies behind these relational issues to clearly see the underlying patterns and causes (Lederach, 2015).

Keywords: qualitative research; sport coaches and teachers; sports for development and peace activities; nonviolence; building relationships

Other concepts can add to the richness of meaning and nuance of peace. Conflict resolution as a peace construct views peace as a static end-state, while conflict transformation views peace as a continuously evolving and developing quality of relationships (Lederach, 2015). Conflict transformation is the process of changing or redirecting an existing conflict amongst parties in a positive direction; a direction that satisfies the needs, interests, and goals of both parties (Lederach, 2015). It differs from conflict resolution in that the key to transformation is holding a bias toward envisioning and engaging conflict as not the enemy, but a gift, an opportunity, a potential catalyst for growth and learning about the deeper underlying relational and structural patterns that prevents conflict from improving (Lederach, 2015). Peace work, therefore, is transformational in that it is embedded in justice, cooperation, and equitable change processes occurring at all levels of relationships (Lederach, 2015). There must be intentional efforts to address the natural ebb and flow of human conflict in relationships through nonviolent approaches, like open dialogue designed for greater mutual understanding, fairness and equality, and respect for differences in relationships. In general, it is difficult to say which of these concepts should be considered central components of contemporary peace, and which may be better accounted for by other constructs or as separate constructs entirely. Therefore, these concepts will be used interchangeably to ground the study.

To effectively understand and intervene in a violent conflict situation, Lederach (1997) places importance on identifying key stakeholders. This identification process is stressed in one of Lederach's approaches to peacebuilding known as web-making. This approach views grassroots level leaders (e.g., teachers, coaches, parents) as placed in a strategic position to connect the ground of society with middle level leaders (e.g., community agents and local leaders like SDP (Sport for Development and Peace) programs and non-government organizations) to tackle particular social problems and promote positive social change (Lederach, 1997). Understood from the context of SDP, scholars and practitioners will often form and sustain cooperative partnerships with local stakeholders (Schulenkorf, 2012). These partnerships include individuals such as grassroots coaches and teachers who are experienced in conflict resolution or can act as mediators to facilitate cooperation amongst at-risk youth groups (Blom et al., 2015; Spacey & Sugden, 2016; Stidder & Haasner, 2007). Previous findings have indicated that coaches and teachers who are charismatic, inspired, and committed to understanding and addressing micro-level issues, can influence positive social change (Whitley et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the impact that SDP youth leaders (stakeholders) have in intentionally or unintentionally and directly or indirectly fostering positive peace through sports remains unclear, particularly with youth from underrepresented geographical-political regions (Gilbert & Bennet, 2012; Giulianotti, 2011; Svensson & Woods, 2017).

To evaluate the impact of SDP programs, researchers have employed qualitative research methods to evaluate grassroots SDP programs. For example, SDP studies have explored stakeholders' personal experiences with the programs during and immediately following program implementation (Cárdenas, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Gannet et al., 2014; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013). Some of this work has solely focused on collecting data from stakeholders within a single country or program, or the data is collected immediately post-program (Cooper et al., 2016; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013). Other research studies have made use of qualitative methods to serve alternative research agendas, such as developing an understanding of implicit or explicit learning and transfer of peace values and skills through sport, as perceived by SDP stakeholders (cf. Cárdenas, 2016; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013; Whitley et al., 2013).

SDP literature supports the utility of seeking out the voices and perspectives of local leaders for informing future best practices, program planning, and program implementation (Gannet et al., 2014). Furthermore, the existing qualitative literature appears to lack sufficient discussion of the types of personal experiences coaches and teachers are having in facilitating positive peace several years after participating in SDP programs (Schulenkorf et al., 2016; Whitley et al., 2019). Many studies primarily follow participants during or at the end of training, while few research outcomes after participants have had the opportunity to spend at least a year practicing the knowledge they have acquired. Thus, it is necessary to study SDP coaches and teachers years after their training to explore the ways in which such training may still be impacting their work with youth. Furthermore, incorporating data from multiple countries within the same study could add a unique perspective to the SDP literature that has been seldomly observed, while also addressing the often-siloed perspective that single context studies offer (Schulenkorf et al., 2016). Additionally, examining participants' experiences in SDP training across two countries allows for SDP researchers to explore general program components as well context-specific components. To that end, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the day-to-day, lived experiences of Tajik and Jordan grassroots youth football coaches and physical education teachers who had previously received SDP training related to fostering a culture for positive peace with their youth.

The Two SDP Coach Education Programs and Cultural Context

Participants within the present study consisted of Jordanian and Tajik youth sport coaches and physical education teachers who had received SDP coach education and training delivered internationally by U.S.-based faculty and sport experts. These programs were selected based upon the accessibility of follow-up with participants post-program, as this was more readily available to the 2nd and 3rd authors. Both programs were developed by the same U.S. faculty and had similar aims, activities, training philosophy, workshop design, football focus, and funding sources (Blom et al., 2014; 2015).

Both programs were designed to equip coaches and physical education teachers with the technical knowledge surrounding citizenship, leadership, and peaceful living theory, through activities and skill acquisition via a "train the trainer" approach. Facilitators led workshops and seminars covering topics on peaceful living, conflict resolution, leadership, and citizenship behaviors, integrating them into football (known in the U.S. as soccer) activities. In-country programs included 2-day workshops where U.S. staff traveled to different regions of each country to work with 15-25 coaches and teachers. A selected representative group of 8-10 coaches from each country also participated in an exchange program in the U.S. Throughout the training, coaches practiced how to integrate teachable moments and purpose-oriented activities with the diverse youth athletes who attended practice sessions. Coaches were encouraged to apply intergroup relational skills (e.g., conflict resolution, active listening, and open communication skills) in working with youth.

METHOD

Participants

The final study sample consisted of 27 participants (see Table 1). To be included, participants needed to: (a) meet residential status in the countries of Jordan or Tajikistan; (b) have participated/received training in at least one workshop from either the Jordan or Tajikistan SDP programs; and (c) currently, or have a history of, coaching/teaching youth sport for a minimum of one year after receiving SDP education and training. Researchers attempted to contact all members who participated in these original programs who met the inclusion criteria. Originally, 16 participants from each targeted country agreed to partake in the study; however, five participants were excluded from the study for not meeting the inclusion criteria.

Table 1. Descriptions of Jordan and Tajik Participants

ID	Age	Gender	Location	SDP Program^
1	45	Female	Tajikistan	full program
2	44	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
3	47	Female	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
4	55	Male	Tajikistan	full program
5	68	Male	Tajikistan	full program
6	49	Female	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
7	43	Male	Tajikistan	full program
8	60	Female	Tajikistan	full program
9	48	Female	Tajikistan	full program
10	56	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
*12	41	Male	Tajikistan	in-country workshop only
17	32	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
18	54	Male	Jordan	full program
19	56	Male	Jordan	full program
20	52	Male	Jordan	full program
21	30	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
22	52	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only
23	25	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
24	34	Male	Jordan	full program
25	40	Female	Jordan	full program
26	43	Male	Jordan	full program
27	42	Female	Jordan	full program
28	48	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
29	41	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
30	43	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only
31	37	Female	Jordan	in-country workshop only
32	53	Male	Jordan	in-country workshop only

* Sixteen coach and teacher participants from each targeted country agreed to partake in the study. Five of the participants (ID # 11 and #13-16) were excluded from the study for insufficiently meeting the inclusion criteria.
^ 'In-country workshop only' includes involvement in an in-country 2-3 day training workshop. 'Full program' includes involvement in an in-country 2-3 day training workshop and a 10-12 day exchange trip to the U.S.

Positionality

Crucial to the study were the primary researcher, interviewers, interpreters, and transcribers, whose collective thought, positionality, and skill were necessary to drive the study forward.

Primary Researcher (PR)

The first author is the primary researcher (PR) who conducted interviews and led the transcription process and analysis. He is a 25-year-old male graduate student who undertook this study as part of his sport psychology and clinical mental health counseling graduate programs at a mid-size university in the Midwest, U.S. The PR was born in Basra, Iraq. At the age of two, during the Iraq-Kuwait war, and at a time where Saddam Hussein's despotic and violent rule made emancipating the country merely a

wishful fantasy, the PR and his immediate family would eventually safely and successfully flee the country of Iraq. He and his family, displaced in Jordan for two years, were eventually granted legal permission to permanently reside in the U.S. in 1999. The PR has 12 years of experience competing in youth football in both Western and Middle Eastern countries. He affirms organized youth sports can create a peaceful and positive outcome in the lives of youth facing disadvantaged conditions and living in conflict-affected communities.

Interviewers

The PR was joined by two professors, one female from sport psychology and one male from counseling psychology, to conduct the in-country interviews. The professors had conducted and researched several SDP projects over the past 10 years, specifically the two programs from which participants were recruited in this study, and they had traveled to Jordan and Tajikistan previously. Thus, they had existing relationships with some participants and some of the interpreters, as well as cultural and program contextual knowledge. The sport psychology professor also has youth coaching and football playing experience, and the counseling psychology professor has a varied sport playing experience and is an expert in conflict prevention and resolution.

Interpreters

Interpreters were hired by local community partners and had either been previously part of SDP training or were educators or students studying interpretation. Three female interpreters and two male interpreters served as part of the support team in the country of Jordan, and two male and two female interpreters in Tajikistan. To mitigate issues associated with translation accuracy, interviewer and interpreter met prior to each interview to practice reviewing the questions and to reinforce the expectation that the interpreters' role consisted of being a reflexive co-researcher (Kapborga & Berterö, 2002).

Transcribers

Three graduate students were selected to assist the PR with the transcription of the English portions of the interview data. Additionally, four bi-lingual English-competent translators were hired to double-check and confirm the quality, accuracy, and validity of the translations performed by the in-country interpreters.

Data Collection

Approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained prior to data collection. Participant recruitment involved posting study information through private social media program sites and sending information to the former in-country project directors and interpreters. Data were collected in the Spring of 2018 when the PR and two interviewers traveled to Jordan and Tajikistan to conduct the interviews.

Interviews with the participants followed similar guidelines outlined by McNamara (2009). To develop the interview guide, the researchers first extracted ideas from the existing literature on SDP coach education program evaluations (Blom et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2016), SDP programming for community development (Lyras & Peachey, 2011), and previous literature on best coaching practices (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). This was in addition to non-SDP related research relating to peace, conflict, violence, peace education and peacebuilding processes (Bar-Tal, 2002; Cárdenas, 2013; Gawerc, 2006; Giulianotti, 2011; Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2008; Stura & Johnston, 2014). An initial list of questions was then shared with peers and faculty experts in the field of SDP and qualitative research, who provided expert feedback related to reducing the number of questions, adding probes, and maintaining an open-ended stance to strengthen the interview process. Approximately 12 revisions were completed over a 12-month period. This recursive process was necessary prior to the implementation of the study, as it established greater coherency in the interview guide with the study purpose (Kvale, 1996). The final semi-structured interview protocol included questions to uncover three topic areas, partly based on participants lived experiences in SDP programs: (a) how they view peace in relation to everyday conflicts with their youth in sport or physical education; (b) efforts to facilitate positive peace through sport-based activities based on what they learned in the SDP training; and (c) experiences in building relationships with youth through sport-based development using SDP techniques. Background and demographic information for each participant was also gathered at the onset of the interview.

Confidentiality and permission to audio-record the interview for transcription and data analysis were discussed during the process of obtaining informed consent. Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim then checked for accuracy by translators. To enhance the integrity of the English translation, a back-translation technique was used where translators listened to the audio-recording while concurrently following along with the English-portion typed transcriptions, then placing notations (e.g., inconsistent

interpretations) in the margins of the assigned transcriptions (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008). If a discrepancy was detected, translators were asked to construct personal interpretations of the participant's responses into English translations. Prior research suggests when translating from one language to another, achieving conceptual equivalence in meanings is often considered more essential than capturing participants' exact words (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008).

Design and Analysis

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the current study, we employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing basic qualitative data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2002). Such approach is used to identify invariant patterns of lived realties as described by SDP youth leaders' subjective experiences. Although predominantly inductive, this process of analysis included deductive aspects.

In this study, analysis of the data involved three coders. The coders consisted of the PR, the fifth author who also assisted with the transcriptions, and the sport psychology professor. The coders assisting the PR were each assigned with 20% of the transcripts to distribute the load and allow for depth of understanding. These coders read through their assigned transcripts thoroughly multiple times to establish familiarity. Coders were instructed to generate descriptive raw codes openly and directly from the data (open coding). Following the initial coding, the PR independently read and sorted through the initial list of descriptive raw codes, which were then coalesced into smaller categories. Relevant smaller categories were then organized to form larger conceptual categories. Finally, the larger conceptual categories were combined to form three dimensions. The PR and the two initial coders met and reviewed the dimensions, conceptual categories, sub-categories, and descriptive raw codes to ensure they were sufficiently and coherently categorized. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) was used to reach consensus when differences arose regarding the construction of the categories and sub-categories. Such phases of analysis were completed iteratively (Creswell, 2013) and independently by the primary researcher and second and fifth authors.

Trustworthiness of Data Collection, Analysis, and Findings

Several procedures were used by the PR to enhance accuracy in the procedures used for data collection, data analysis, and the formation of sound interpretations (Creswell, 2014; Shenton, 2004). Through the adoption of a relativist and constructivist approach and the rejection of objective, universal criteria (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), the research team sought to capture an account of peace in sport through learning with others about how positive peace might be experienced in the participants' cultural context. This allowed for data to emerge naturally which helped address the study research question and overall aim of this study. The interdependency between the researcher-participant is inherent in certain qualitative methods (e.g., interviews; Ponterotto, 2005). Furthermore, such interdependency is advantageous in qualitative research, because it facilitates the co-creation of meanings and interpretations of the phenomena being studied (Ponterotto, 2005). However, qualitative researchers are often encouraged to engage in a constant process of reflexivity, which invited the primary researcher to reflect on his presuppositions, biases, personal experiences and expectations throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). Reflexivity was also enhanced through a peer debriefing strategy termed interviewing the interviewer (Chenail, 2011; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). This process involved having a peer conduct an interview with the researcher who is asked to respond to their own interview questions. Throughout the data analysis process, the coders regularly met to draw constant comparisons (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) amongst the identified categories. It was understood by all coders that when data analysis involves multiple researchers, often different patterns would be discovered in the codes at different points in time and are thus prone to construct different levels of interpretations for each category (Fernald & Duclos, 2005). In sum, employing multiple reviewers enhanced the objectivity of how the primary investigators arrived at the larger dimensions.

RESULTS AND SPECIFIC DISCUSSION

Overall, the coding analysis generated sub-categories, which were then grouped into conceptual categories, and then into three larger dimensions (i.e., Changes in Everyday Lived Realities, Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence, and Beginning, Building, and Broadening Connections and Relationships; see Table 2). Due to the authors' focus on presenting new knowledge, detailed findings are only provided for the first two dimensions, as the third dimension has been well-documented in previous literature (Gilbert & Bennet, 2012; Hemphill et al., 2018; Stidder & Haasner, 2007).

Dimension 1: Changes in Everyday Lived Realities

This dimension incorporates some of the change processes, perceptions, and experiences documented by the coaches and teachers (Levitt, 2014) and consists of two categories of coded data: (a) changes in coaches and teachers' attitudes

Table 2. Youth sport coaches and teachers lived experiences with fostering a culture for positive peace

General Dimensions	Conceptual Categories	Sub-categories
Changes in Everyday Lived Realities	Change in Coaches/Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviors	Sports as A Vehicle for Fostering Peace and Social Change in Youth Social Responsibility, Leadership, and Citizenship Teaching Styles and Disciplinary Approaches
	Change in Youths' Attitudes and Behaviors	On the Field Off the Field
Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence	Peace Education	Equality/Unity Respect & Appreciation Teamwork/Cooperation Empathetic Listening Tolerance
	Conflict Transformation	Shared Sense of Power Autonomy-Driven Open Dialogue Teachable Moments Deliberate Team Meetings Corrective Experiences
	SDP Lessons	Concepts and Activities Fun Recreational Games
*Beginning, Building, and Broadening Connections and Relationships	Coach-Athlete Relationships	Coaches/Teachers Perceived Roles Coaches/Teachers Perception of Youth Communication Styles Youth Perception of Coach/Teacher Coach-Athlete Relationships Off the Field Trust-Building
	Activities for Shaping Intergroup Contact	Food Gatherings Field Trips/Team Outings Social Media/Technology Inclusion Teambuilding

*not discussed in current article

and behaviors; and (b) changes in youth athletes' attitudes and behaviors (as reported by the coaches and teachers).

Changes in Coaches' and Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviors

Findings for this first dimension reflect the ways coaches and teachers reported dealing with the conflicts in their own lives through peaceful means, the impact of SDP training on their coaching/teaching, and their intentionality in their efforts to transform how others respond to conflict. Sub-categories identified in this general category include (a) sports as a vehicle for fostering peace and social change in youth; (b) social responsibility, leadership, and citizenship; and (c) teaching styles and disciplinary approaches.

Sports as a Vehicle for Fostering Peace and Social Change in Youth.

This sub-theme complements the classic perceptions regarding sports programs, as a unique mechanism to shape positive developmental experiences and peaceful relational outcomes in youth from all social and cultural backgrounds. It particularly relates to those programs which use football as the main sport (Rookwood & Palmer, 2011; Rookwood, 2008). One coach from Jordan expressed that "football is the only language between the whole world. You can connect the world through football" (P17).

These findings are consistent with the discussion on positive youth development found in previous research

regarding youth involvement in organized or recreational, adult-supervised programs using sport and physical activities (Coakley, 2015; Holt et al., 2017). SDP programs work most commonly by targeting vulnerable young people, with the purpose of cultivating development and social inclusion through adult modeling, reinforcement, and life skills training (Danish, 2002; Holt et al., 2017; Koh & Camiré, 2015).

Social Responsibility, Leadership, and Citizenship.

Coaches and teachers play a crucial role in fostering positive social change in their youth. Usually their impact starts from how they view their role within the classroom or on the football field. In this study, coaches and teachers found themselves assuming leadership responsibilities, which extended into their personal lives. One coach shared that he felt moved to take some responsibility to support the future of youth coming up in the villages where he was born and currently works:

They know that they [youth] are the future. So, I assume that I am making (investing) my investments into (making the) country development through working with these kids, because these kids one day will become some maybe important people in the country. Some become important decision makers…and if they are healthy, and active, the country, the life will get better. (P2)

In this study, female and male coaches and teachers expressed having an increased awareness of and capacity to approach gender disparities observed in their own community. Moreover, several female coaches in the study pointed to their involvement in SDP programs as playing a role in their motivation to begin recognizing and using their leadership position to address complex social systemic challenges. These challenges have been historically, symbolically, politically, and moralistically imposed upon the identity and power of the female athletes or students they worked with. They have manifested as the lack of institutional support, equitable resource distribution, and fair opportunities in sport participation. A female Jordanian coach illustrated that challenging the status quo by directly engaging parents was one possible way for change:

I try to face parents that don't want their daughters to play. So, I try to convince, to let their girls play, because I talk to them about my own experience and how it affected me and when I played how I became more independent, self-confident. (P17)

Consistent with a positive peace and social change agenda, these findings demonstrate how SDP training has helped transform teachers and coaches' role and responsibility to begin acting with and on behalf of female youths' future voice and human rights. Within this context, coaches and teachers use of communications and actions appears aimed at (a) promoting equal sport opportunities for girls and women, (b) confronting stereotypical gendered roles and norms, and (c) engaging with important stakeholders (e.g., parents) in their respective local communities. Findings suggest that female youth motivations to take up sport and physical activity may depend on the coaches and teachers' personal experiences with gender discrimination (or empowerment), as well as parents' belief in sports health, identity, and occupational benefits. This motivation may be impacted by having role models who are willing to advocate for sport or educational initiatives that aim to break down social barriers (Malnati et al., 2016; Meier, 2015; Moghadam, 2004).

Teaching Styles and Disciplinary Approaches.

In this study, participants reported changes to disciplining and limit-setting with youth who were experiencing conflicts, the adoption of growth-oriented teaching philosophies and a shift away from power-oriented or coercive techniques. For example, fewer coaches and teachers use physical punishment as their main disciplinary method following their involvement in an SDP education training program (Khateeb, 2015; Peter, 2010). To illustrate, one Tajik female coach revealed changes in herself, stating she had grown more patient with youths' misbehavior:

I have even beaten my students before. I could not stand the bad behavior and so I practiced the violence. But now after this program and new educational rules (Ministry of Education strictly prohibited any violence towards kids) I do not use physical violence. …Now I try to explain them. (P1)

Male coaches and teachers also noted using less physical punishment as a method of disciplining young boys who were oftentimes stereotypically the main recipients of this form of discipline. For one Jordanian male teacher, this meant undertaking a personal and professional transformation:

In my first experience as a schoolteacher, if any student talks back at me shouting at me, maybe I use physical force. But after that I changed. After I did your [SDP] course, I changed myself. And my life. I know that in the past I wasn't so good. (P19)

As a result of their involvement with the SDP program,

participants in this study reported decreasing their use of physical punishment approaches to discipline and applying more positive and nonviolent coaching techniques. This supports existing research on training coaches and teachers guided by a philosophy of nonviolence (Rookwood & Palmer, 2011; Turnnidge et al., 2014).

Multiple participants highlighted a 'humane-first, winning-second' position as a salient feature to their practice as agents of positive social change. A male Tajik coach articulated his changed views on sports as an activity that was less about winning and more about fostering a team-first environment:

It's okay if we lose and if we lose, we are still one team. We don't have to make problems. He says that this isn't only something you do in sports, but from [my] point of view sports is one place to start solving these types of problems. (P20)

This did not imply that coaches rejected the value of winning or promoting active competition. Rather, the coaches demonstrated a greater focus in reinforcing more internal rewards, such as optimizing a youth's psychosocial development.

Changes in Youths' Attitudes and Behaviors

Two sub-categories emerged from this conceptual category relating to changes personal and social coaches saw in their youth. These sub-categories relate to: (a) on the field and (b) off the field changes. Findings from this sub-category of codes were slightly less developed than other categories due to coaches' own limited and biased recounting of specific success stories; nonetheless, these findings serve to describe some of the transformations observed by the coaches and teachers following the employment of implicit and explicit strategies while working with disaffected or disconnected youth.

On the Field

Coach and teacher participants recognized some changes in their youth in their clubs/programs since last participating in the SDP coaching training program. Different sources of information (i.e., anecdotal, word-of-mouth, observed) served as markers for deducing changes in youth's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences. Participants shared examples of youth attitude/behavior changes included (a) increased openness to participate in sport activities intended to teach a transferable life skill; (b) approaching coaches and teachers to openly discuss social issues; (c) better regulating strong emotions that accompany competitive situations and sensitive topics; (d) modifying how youth conduct themselves in relationship with adults; and (e) managing negativity by reframing game losses or lack of playing time as learning opportunities. Coaches attributed changes to several factors, including their own deliberate application of lessons, strategies, and practices learned both independently and via SDP programs on how to instill peace or foster social change through sports.

Another finding revealed a rise in the number of girls actively and openly willing to participate in unfamiliar activities led by the coach. Participants reported that more girls were willing to challenge stereotypical labels and roles imposed upon them relating to participation in "male dominated" sports. Excerpts were offered relating to Muslim girls' modifications on dress codes that had prevented them from participating in sports. In the words of one Tajik participant:

I am observing changes, the same thing though, you can't change the person all at once. The situations are changing, but it is changing slowly. For example, there are more people, especially more girls, interested in football and in sports in general… girls are open to wearing the uniform, they are not feeling shy at all, before two, three years ago, it was almost impossible for a girl to wear a uniform, now they don't feel as ashamed. (P11)

Increased female engagement in sport-specific activities has led coaches to observe how young girls approach the physical game differently, as previously young girls may have fixated on their own fragility or overlooked their own athletic competence. This approach contrasts with past approaches, as research generally indicates that gendered stereotypes concerning the expected physical style of play act as barriers to girls participating in male-dominated sports (Zipp & Nauright, 2018).

Off the Field

Only a few coaches elaborated with concrete and vivid examples of social changes in youth who had previously shown disaffected and disengaged attitudes and behaviors:

So, he [the boy] is living with his grandmother and he's a really poor kid like they don't have any money. So, he's in 6th grade, [I] tried to help him [the boy]. So, I talked to the principal, and the principal said that he could have whatever kind of food he likes from the school for free. Sometimes they also make him lead and that changed him. Like the groups or sometimes during class. Like you [the boy] are responsible for what we are about to do here—to show him that he is just as important as others. In our team,

I made him [the boy] the captain of the team. Sometimes I make him the one instead of [my] place [the coach]. They [the teammates] came and ask me their coach, and I would say no I am not your coach no longer, [the boy] is the coach. And that makes him fly in the clouds and feel so high and so by that his attitudes changed positively. (P22)

To become involved to this extent requires a highly attuned coach or teacher. This individual must be sensitive enough to register nonverbal signals communicated by a young person during an interaction. Beyond this, the coach or teacher then must choose to act compassionately within their capacity on these cues, with the hopes of conveying messages that can instill a sense of empowerment and belonging; this participant attributed his work with this student to his SDP training.

Dimension 2: Practical Strategies for Fostering Nonviolence

We found participants were still employing some of the methods learned in their SDP training. Participants reported the application of innovative practices to support their decision-making, in which they employed methods to prevent and transform conditions (e.g., power imbalances, rigid identities/positions, ideologies, fears, intolerance) that may precipitate, perpetuate, or transform interpersonal conflicts occurring amongst youth. Thus, researchers identified three sub-categories that were placed under Dimension 2: (a) peace education, (b) conflict transformation, and (c) SDP lessons.

Peace Education

When asked about which principles or skills from their SDP training they implemented with their youth, participants reflected on efforts to reduce and transform conflict through five identified sub-categories: equality/unity, respect and appreciation, teamwork/cooperation, empathetic listening, and tolerance. Each of these topics were addressed by their SDP curriculum. Because of the similarity of these concepts, they are discussed collectively instead of separately.

One coach from Jordan reflected on a moment with his youth where he acknowledged affirming young peoples' inherent right to experience a sense of equality. Consequently, such moment gave rise to teamwork and cooperative behaviors:

On the pitch, when they play against anyone else, [I] want them to be like one team and to move this forward for the bigger picture. (P17)

Another coach hinted at a perspective consistent with the value of fairness, when he ensured youth on the team had an equal chance to develop their athletic abilities and share playing time:

I promote the feeling that we are all one and equal, no superior or inferior. Everyone gets a chance to play. Even the players who aren't playing, they all get a chance to play. (P32)

Coaches also encouraged their youth to practice respect and appreciation for individual and collective differences. Coaches emphasized responding to individual differences with gratitude and appreciation to keep the peace and sustain focus on the matches and play. For example, one coach noted the regular use of thanking one's opponent after a loss or when emotional reactions to perceived conflict surfaced:

And when they have a conflict ... even if someone behaves towards you unfairly or badly say "thank you" to him. [I] advises [my] girls not to argue with them, just be calm peaceful, say 'Thank you, Thank you. It's okay, you're right.' The opposite side is shocked like 'Why if we are arguing are they peaceful?' This really works . . . My students win because [the youth] don't spend time and efforts on arguing and fighting, they just play. Kids appreciated this method and use it in their daily life too. (P9)

In this study, coaches emphasized encouraging youth to make conscious choices on how to best deal with adverse game outcomes or conditions. They did this by offering alternative methods to fighting such as cultivating the attitudes of patience and cooperation amongst peers. For example, participants' incorporation of equality and cooperation manifests in the form of granting youth equal opportunities to participate in sport activities. As such, coaches and teachers facilitating team sports and activities such as football are encouraged to give careful thought to the design of sport or physical activity programs for vulnerable, conflict-affected youth. This is not only important in relation to the goals and intervention strategies to be used (e.g., Blom et al., 2015; Svensson & Woods, 2017), but also in the skills the program aims for participants to develop (Danish, 2002).

Conflict Transformation

Participants described several ways of deliberatively but also indirectly helping youth to better handle emotional states and task-related situations that may provoke conflict, both on the field and off the field. These ideas were

identified as: (a) shared sense of power, (b) autonomy-driven, (c) open dialogue, (d) teachable moments, (e) deliberate team meetings, and (f) corrective experiences. Multiple excerpts and quotes from both Jordanian and Tajik participants illustrate the formal and informal types of interactions coaches and teaches have within their team. These quotes also show the deliberative communicative team and individual meetings used to promote alternatives for minimizing the frequency, intensity, and impact of conflicts. In the words of one Tajik coach:

With preparation, how [we] avoid the conflicts is it starts before the match. [We] gather the team and talk to them, you [the youth] should behave fairly to your opponents. You shouldn't fight with anyone. That's why [we] don't have a lot of conflicts because before the match start, [we] conduct talks. (P2)

Coaches also considered using their direct interactions with youth as a mean for offering support. For instance, one coach noted, "I share ideas with him and I give him my advice, don't argue with someone, especially the teachers, and you have a problem, it's not the right way to settle roles or fight him." (P24)

Coaches also spoke about alerting youth of the consequences to instigating conflicts with teammates, opposing team members, or referees, as well as any conflict materializing off the field with parents, teachers, or other youth by setting and enforcing ground rules. In addition, coaches discussed the involvement of youth in improving the soccer practices. An example of this would involve a coach soliciting youth feedback on lessons learned during practice. This element is representative of an athlete-centered approach:

Like before the kids were not able to speak or voice their point of view. But after that we [the coaches] started to ask them questions "did you get any benefits from the training? What you got from this?" (P20)

These findings appear consistent with the literature on conflict resolution as one form of restorative practice, which often includes the value of holding formal or on-the-spot team and individual meetings (Hemphill et al., 2018). The basic premise behind team meetings held by coaches is that it provides individuals a space for formally addressing unacknowledged and unspoken tensions within the team (Hemphill et al., 2018). These findings point to the literature on open dialogue as an effective form of conflict resolution (Ungerleider, 2012; Yukelson, 1997).

SDP Lessons

Some participants within the study recounted their implementation of some of the conflict resolution activities and fun-recreational games, as learned from the SDP training they had participated in four years earlier. The most popular activities were the dentist game (a health game) and conflict resolution bench (Horrocks, 1978), as well as the conflict closed fist. Conflict resolution bench activity was cited as the most frequently used conflict resolution strategy. One coach noted:

One of the methods that I use is the conflict bench of making friendships. First, I call them and have them both sit over here and imagine a bench. And you solve this problem yourselves now. It depends on the situation, but about 5 minutes they sit and talk through it. They are both pretty aggressive usually back and forth, so about after 5 minutes they come to me? (P4)

Another participant drew from a group experience where he chose to implement the Closed Fist activity to experientially differentiate forms of communication used in peer or adult relationships:

Everyone, anyone who I used the exercise with did not know what I mean. Everyone tried to open the other persons hand (with force). And then I asked them/talked with them and say please can open your hands and everyone opened their hands, and everyone became happy. Then I said we can sit down to solve problems/conflict between each other not by using fighting but by talking about it. (P19)

For this coach, the Closed Fist activity helped to discern the effects of violent communication from nonviolent communication, and how the latter could be a more viable, alternative response that yields constructive relational outcomes. These results support SDP intervention studies that have been conducted to prepare and equip coaches and teachers with tools for conditioning young people with culture-specific skills; when carried out, they carry with them consequences increasing the probability that youth grow into equitable citizens and agents for positive social change within their communities (Blom et al., 2014, 2015; Spacey & Sudgen, 2016).

The use of fun recreational games within the sporting context was endorsed by several participants as another desirable and viable avenue for maintaining wonder and fulfilling needs for stimulation common to most young people. Using the words from one Tajik coach, "The kids don't have free time to think about harming and conflict,

sport is filling in that space and time (P22)." Several studies support the utility of sport programs in redirecting and minimizing attitudes and acts of violence (Burnett, 2010; Waardenburg, 2006; Whitley et al., 2013).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present study contributes to the SDP field in several ways. First, it advances SDP researchers' and practitioners' knowledge on how grassroots coaches/teachers may be using sport-based interventions to build a culture for positive peace, particularly with youth exposed to systems affected by violent conflicts. This knowledge is consistent with potential social and cultural challenges found in previous research on coaches and teachers' reported experiences as social change agents (Cárdenas, 2016; Cooper et al., 2016; Gannet et al., 2014; Lecrom & Dwyer, 2013; Whitley et al., 2013).

Second, the study aimed to address some of the limitations found in the Schulenkorf et al. (2016) review study related to the need for follow-up studies, qualitative methods, and cross-cultural considerations. For example, by extending the follow-up time on previously delivered SDP training programs, the authors were able to explore variable positive peace expressions and behaviors from the interest of youth sport leaders' years after initial SDP training. This study further contributes to the SDP literature by offering a unique opportunity to explore the perspectives of positive peace and social change from multiple programs and countries. Furthermore, the accumulation of new data on experiences of participants in SDP programs targeting stakeholders working directly with youth on ground, supports previous reviews (Whitley et al., 2019).

Third, some participants in the study participated in a full SDP program, while others only went through a single workshop. Findings from this study revealed that following this type of program design could be a worthwhile training approach. Participants from the full program reported transferring more knowledge, tools, and lessons learned compared to those who had only participated in one workshop. This transfer was reflected in some of the coaches' and teachers' documented responses regarding the depth in recall of training lessons. Some also shared about the meaningful impact of the lessons on their own personal and professional worldview, which supports Cooper et al. (2016) findings. Participants who participated in U.S. coach exhange training had stronger and more specific examples of personal and professional change. Even after four to six years, SDP coaches could identify examples of program teachings that they have and can see themselves still applying in certain situations with their youth.

Data indicates that local participants are valuable sources of information when they are sought out; open about their problems, failures, hopes and aspirations as social agents; and are attending to the disparate voices of students, parents, and other coaches/teachers. In extension, these individuals are more likely to find ways of creating and achieving peace through peaceful means for young people, as they are open to receiving continued training to become better equipped with the skills required for transforming conflicts.

Study Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

Findings from the study have several implications for SDP researchers and practitioners. One such implication is for the support that SDP train-the-trainer programs have a lasting impact on coaches and teachers, offering pedagogical and educational tools for working with young people (Blom et al., 2014, 2015; Spacey & Sudgen, 2016). Although SDP program studies often report challenges in identifying a clear and sustainable impact upon youth that can be attributed directly to the activities, this study reinforced sustainability of principles and practices learned through SDP training programs. The previous point is specifically applied to the implementation of social change and positive peace strategies which was achieved through the simple practice of asking participants periodically to reflect on how they are using or could use the training techniques in their daily lives or with their athletes and students.

This research may have important implications for both peace studies and the emerging interdisciplinary field of SDP, in terms of theory development and practice in the area of sport for peace. Participants from this study were keen on the convenient use of sport to assist young people in acquiring respect, empathy, understanding, perspective-taking, cooperation, equality, and responsibility—values and skills relatively reputed by peace researchers in tackling structural and cultural factors causing violent conflicts and dividing communities (Lea-Howarth, 2006). Namely, participants from both countries and programs appeared to view sports as one approach for cultivating harmonious and just cultural environments. These findings uphold previous findings that demonstrate that the evident peace-building benefits of SDP programs for young people come more from the social process facilitated by trained and caring leaders, and not necessarily by the activity type. These benefits extend to the accumulation of experiences and skills that will provide young people with social capital in a much wider range of situations.

Although the findings are impactful, several limitations

within the study must be addressed. Data collection was limited to participants from Jordan and Tajikistan, and therefore researchers and practitioners should approach carefully when attempting to generalize these findings to other cultural contexts. It should be noted, qualitative researchers collect individual narratives due to the value they place on idiographic content. Alternatively described, SDP youth leaders are encouraged to give precedence to the subjective nature of understanding human behavior in day-to-day contexts, and thus study findings should be understood in this context (Merriam, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Second, the researchers encountered challenges in ensuring consistent and complete translations. Using interpreters can at times inadvertently or intentionally infuse their own implicit or explicit biases when interpreting back to the researcher the participants' responses to the interview questions, which may have important epistemological implications (Singal & Jeffrey, 2008). Third, findings on changes to youth attitudes and behaviors are limited to coach and teacher participants' perspectives and memory. This limitation could be strengthened by having youth participants corroborate the documented reports along with their parents.

It is also evident that these findings are both situation and context-specific, and that the findings on how peace is emerging can be highly individualized. Researchers are encouraged to practice honoring personal, relational, and cultural descriptions over the macro understanding of peace that typically involves "top-down" post conflict reconstruction and state involvement (Galtung, 1996). Further, as done within this and previous SDP studies, researchers should follow suit in having the voices of stakeholders be involved in community development and social change (Kay, 2009).

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interests were found while writing and submitting this manuscript.

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APPENDICES

Appendices, documents and instrumental materials used to facilitate the research process across the different stages of the research project including data collection, data transcription, and data analysis is available upon request from the first author.

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Original Research

Preparing for long-term success: Sport for Development's strategies during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Every individual across the globe has been, and continues to be, impacted by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Sport for Development (SfD) is a field of work that relies predominantly on in-person, face-to-face, high contact programming. SfD's work, therefore, was significantly strained due to social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders. This study compiled interviews with administrators in 10 South African based SfD organizations, assessing how they innovated and adjusted to the pandemic, as well as which strategies best helped them successfully manage change. Major findings include a need for collaboration among SfD organizations, a strong focus on creativity and innovation in the field, and a need for organizations to balance structure and flexibility to allow responsiveness to changing needs. These strategies should be integrated as a focus within SfD beyond the pandemic, as they are long-term success strategies that will allow SfD organizations to be prepared for future pivotal decision points in their lifespans.

PREPARING FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS: SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT'S STRATEGIES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On December 31, 2019, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission issued a statement about several cases of 'viral pneumonia' in China. By January 9, 2020, the disease had been identified as the novel coronavirus and by March 7, 2020, the number of reported cases globally surpassed 100,000 (World Health Organization, 2021a). What originally seemed a viral outbreak in China quickly spread to become a life-altering worldwide pandemic that forced countries to close their borders, institute stay-at-home orders for citizens, bring business and educational systems to a standstill, and fundamentally change the way individuals went about their daily lives. In late 2020 and late 2021, the Delta and Omicron variants were first detected in India and South Africa, respectively (World Health Organization, 2021b). Although many felt the coronavirus would be well under control by this point, the variants of the disease demonstrate the ways it is continuing to impact lives.

Every individual across the globe has been, and continues to be, effected by the coronavirus pandemic. Although many successfully adjusted to new ways of working and learning, some have faced more challenges than others. Sport for Development (SfD) is "the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youths and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution" (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 311), and is a field of work that relies predominantly on in-person, face-to-face, high contact programming (McSweeney et al., 2021). Many recipients of SfD programs are youth and/or those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Kidd, 2008), making access to

Keywords: sport for development; organizational change; innovation; collaboration; COVID-19

alternate versions of virtual programming problematic or inaccessible. Although 80% of the developed world has access to the Internet, this is only true for 35% of individuals in developing nations (United Nations, 2017). Though SfD programs are occurring across the globe, many reside in developing nations (the continent of Africa having the highest concentration of SfD programs; Svensson & Woods, 2017). Therefore, although many businesses and organizations were able to shift to virtual work and programming environments, this was unrealistic for many involved in SfD.

So how were SfD organizations, specifically those working in disadvantaged communities where access to virtual programming was limited, able to adjust to social distancing and stay-at-home orders in a way that continued to serve their participants? Various scholars and practitioners have outlined the changes SfD organizations made due to the impact of COVID-19. For example, many shifted programming to online or at-home models, added new health education topics to their curriculum, supported participants through feeding programs, adopted more user-led approaches, and overall found creative ways of continuing to support their community members (Borkowski et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2020; Donnelly et al., 2020; Lansley, 2020). More specifically, the importance of being flexible, creative, and innovative has emerged as critical to SfD organizations' survival during this time (Donnelly et al., 2020; Lansley, 2020; McSweeney et al., 2021). The current study builds on these findings by attempting to assess how organizations shifted programming and practices as a result of the pandemic and, more importantly, what strategies most helped them adjust successfully (not only what they did, but how they did that successfully). In short, the purpose of this study was to explore how SfD organizations innovated to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organizations interviewed for this study continued to serve their participants in a different way during the strictest stay-at-home orders and resumed more traditional forms of SfD programming when restrictions were lifted. Given their location in South Africa, however, they have experienced fluctuations in strict protocols and lighter versions of COVID-19 safety regulations, so continue to adjust accordingly. The data that emerged from this analysis can be useful to SfD practitioners who are currently working through pandemic restrictions, but more importantly, are valuable to all SfD organizations who may face hardships or challenges in the future that require them to fundamentally shift how they operate. Although we may not be faced with a pandemic in the future, there will surely be other times of unexpected change and uncertainty, so better understanding strategies and innovations that can help SfD organizations remain salient during pivotal decision points is critical. Therefore, although COVID-19 contextualized this study, its applicability extends far beyond the pandemic into managerial and leadership strategies for all SfD organizations who hope to remain effective and relevant to their constituents.

COVID-19 and Sport

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sport has been well documented. Monumental financial losses due to cancelled and postponed sporting events, job loss resulting from suspended seasons and events, athlete short- and long-term health, and an overall threat to a sense of normalcy that sport brings to people's lives are just a few of the negative impacts (Pearl, 2020; Warner & Martin, 2020). Social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders forced most sports into hibernation, and recovery has come sporadically. The 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, postponed to 2021 and held without fans in attendance, were an obvious depiction of the lasting limitations of sport during a pandemic (Gale, 2021).

Just as importantly as sport at the most elite levels, youth and community-based sport have been fundamentally changed by COVID-19. City, state, and country-wide safety protocols have led to a decrease in physical activity due to the postponement of youth sport activities, in- and out-of-school sport programming, and even informal play (Bates et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2020; Pearl, 2020). According to Borkowski et al. (2020), "Social distancing measures have meant that organizations have had to stop their regular programming taking away these safe physical spaces and adapt both delivery modalities and content to respond to the crisis" (para. 5). This is not just a short-term issue. In a survey of 290 youth sport organizations in the United States, 46% reported worrying about permanently shutting down due to the pandemic (Silverman, 2020).

The issue greatly effects youth who are the recipients of sport and its benefits. The loss of physical activity results in a myriad of health-related concerns including rising obesity rates, higher prevalence of non-communicable diseases, and a delay or loss in skill acquisition (Kelly et al., 2020; Pearl, 2020; United Nations, 2020a). Add to that the loss of the socializing effects of sport and we are seeing increased rates of various mental health challenges, socio-emotional impacts, isolation, increases in gender and child-based violence, and a regression in sense of community (Dixon et al., 2020; Hughes et al., 2020; Pearl, 2020; Pons et al., 2020; United Nations, 2020a; Warner & Martin, 2020). Early evidence has also suggested that some of these

negative impacts are being felt more acutely by persons of color and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (Bates et al., 2021; Ettekal & Agans, 2020; United Nations, 2020a). Collectively, sport greatly felt the effects of COVID-19 in many ways, from health to economics. Sport for development, a sub-sector of the sport industry, has similarly recognized its impacts.

Sport for Development's Role

Sport for development organizations, many of which are youth focused, have tried to combat the issues mentioned above while simultaneously navigating the challenges created by the pandemic and its subsequent restrictions on programming. For some, this has meant reframing their primary purpose, either temporarily or permanently. Borkowski et al. (2020), in interviewing SfD organizations, found that adaptations to the pandemic have resulted in three primary goals: (a) continuing to support youth remotely, (b) providing accurate COVID-19 health related information, and (c) supporting other necessary non-sport programs such as feeding programs. A case-study approach to investigating how SfD programs have responded to the needs of participants similarly found three primary foci: (a) love, safety, and support, (b) educational advancement, and (c) provision of essential supplies such as food (Dixon et al., 2020). Other SfD organizations have tried to continue with their central strategic initiatives in different formats, such as virtual programming. Although some have found this strategy successful, it may limit the reach of programming to more affluent youth (Bates et al., 2021). The use of online tools and programming is still developing, so its overall successfulness is yet to be determined (Bates et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2020).

Close to the start of the pandemic, In May of 2020, the United Nations released a policy brief titled The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development. In addition to outlining some of the short-term changes that resulted from the pandemic, the brief also suggested strategies for successfully re-opening sporting events and supporting youth during the pandemic. Among those recommendations were a collaborative approach to serving youth (governments, intergovernmental organizations, sports federations, and clubs), and an eye toward innovation, recommending "new and innovative solutions to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 on the world of sport" (United Nations, 2020b, p. 3). In short, SfD organizations should focus on collaboration and innovation.

The work that has been done related to innovation in SfD is emerging and has been primarily led by Svensson and colleagues (Svensson et al., 2020; Svensson & Hambrick, 2019; Svensson & Mahoney, 2020). Svensson and Hambrick (2019), interviewing 48 SfD organizations across six continents found, among other things, that innovative organizations intentionally create spaces for a shared learning process and engage regularly with outside stakeholders. They specifically highlight the importance of external stakeholders in the process. Svensson and Mahoney (2020) focused their work more internally, identifying internal conditions that lead to social innovation in SfD organizations. They cited a need for a strong organizational culture, an entrepreneurial leader, paid staff who embrace change, unrestricted funding, and a flat organizational structure. Specifically related to COVID-19, much of the data emerging suggests that innovation and creative thinking has been critical to SfD organizations who have successfully adapted (Donnelly et al., 2020; Lansley, 2020).

Related to innovation, Ratten (2020) suggested that sport entrepreneurship may play a central role in recovering from the crisis of COVID-19. Ratten (2020) sees crises as opportunities to shift priorities and implement new actions, and the value creation lens through which sport entrepreneurs view their roles may better lend itself to technological innovations, creativity, and more positive end-games. What Ratten (2020) refers to as a crisis may reflect similarities to what Dixon and Svensson (2019) term "pivotal decision points" in the life of SfD organizations (p. 464). Studying one nascent SfD organization, the authors tracked several decision points in the developmental stages of the organization, discussing the logics and tensions at each stage. They note that for SfD organizations to remain sustainable, they must be able to adapt to changing environments and responsd to input from stakeholders (Dixon & Svensson, 2019).

Though Dixon and Svensson's (2019) work was conducted and published pre-pandemic and referred more broadly to a myriad of decision points, the COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt created a worldwide pivotal decision point in the field of SfD. Exploring this further, Dixon et al. (2020) gathered data from youth and program leadership within a Kenya-based SfD organization on how they responded to the pandemic. Among other findings, the pandemic has resulted in three primary impacts on the future of the organization: (a) a refocus on the organization's core values as drivers of mission, (b) internal tensions that need to be processed, and (c) adaptations to program delivery. The authors noted particularly that the flexible nature of the organization was key in continuing to meet the needs of the youth (Dixon et al., 2020). In general, innovation and change seem to be key elements for SfD organizations in general, but even more so

during a major time of change such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

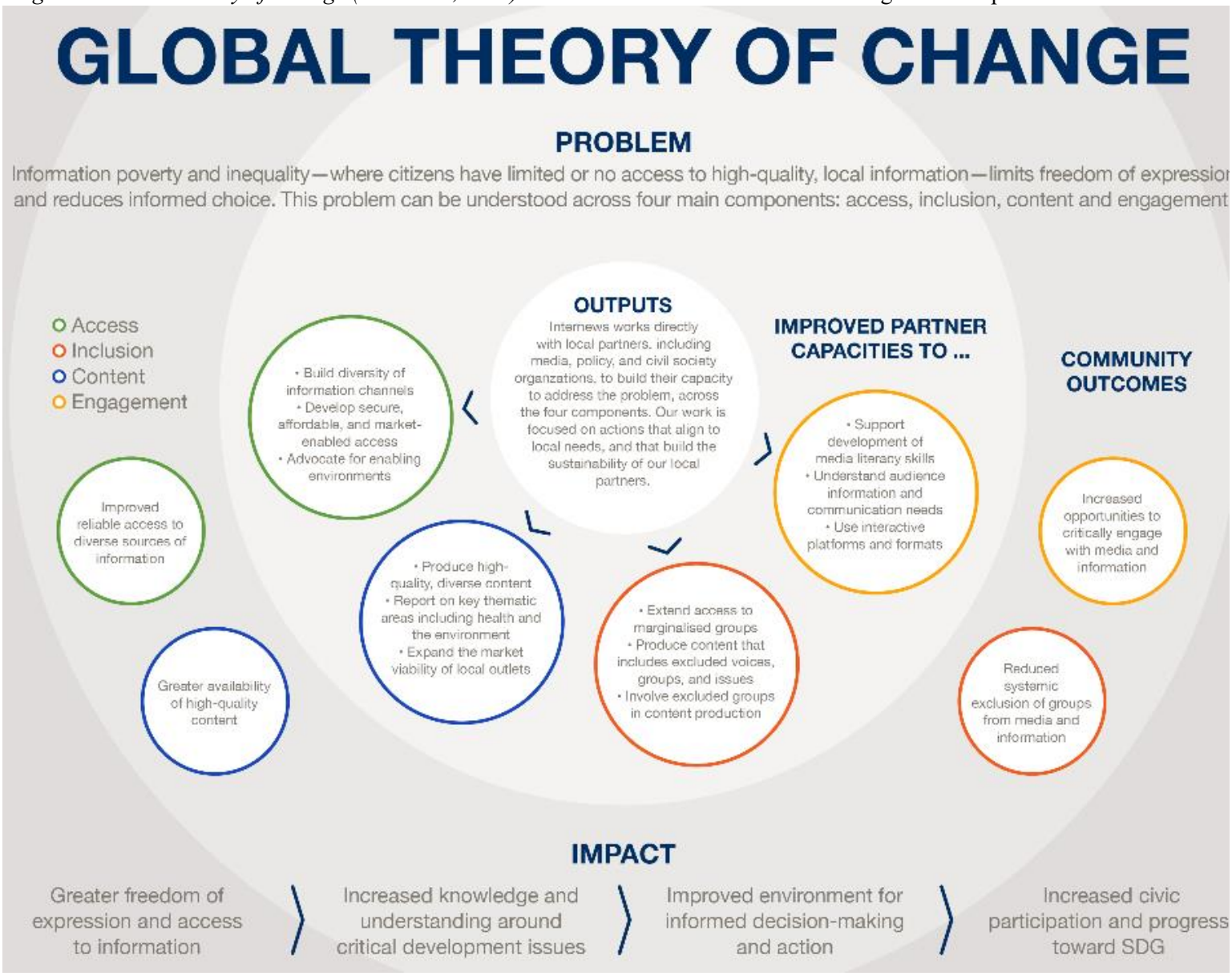
The Global Theory of Change

Considering the pivotal decision point created by the pandemic, and noting a need for innovation and change, the Global Theory of Change was utilized in framing the current study. The Global Theory of Change was created by Internews, a consulting agency that supports over 100 independent news agencies across the globe, with a goal of empowering trustworthy news and reporting (Internews, 2020a). The Global Theory of Change focuses on four community outcomes: access, inclusion, content, and engagement (Figure1).

Figure 1. Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020)

The Global Theory of Change is not an academically tested and validated theory, but rather a theory used in practice when working with non-profit organizations across the globe. Internews has over 40 years of experience and is active in 100 languages, 150 countries in 5 regions, and with 750 active partners, all working toward the creation of stable, inclusive societies (Internews, 2020b). It is an organization that is well utilized in academia as not only a source of reliable news outlets, but also as a participant recruitment site and/or case study for academic research (Carlson et al., 2018; Geertsema-Sligh, 2019a; 2019b; Kent & Taylor, 2011).

Internews has been highly involved in the global media response to COVID-19, launching their Strategic Approach to COVID-19 report in April of 2020, helping debunk myths in the media related to disease and outbreaks (Thomas & Senkpeni, 2020), and aiding the Pacific Media Centre in their research and training related to pandemic related disin-



formation (Robie & Krishnamurthi, 2020). More specifically, the Pacific Media Centre leaned on the Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020a) in considering their 'disinfodemic' project (Robie & Krishnamurthi, 2020, p. 179). The theory was also cited as a guiding source of Njuguna's (2020) work on children in development in East Africa. Given Internews' history of work related to international development across the globe (e.g., gender equity, poverty, disease, children, and youth), coupled with the work they are doing specifically related to COVID-19, as well as the linkages to the academic world outlined above, the authors deemed the Global Theory of Change an appropriate, very applicable baseline for the current study.

Through a lens of the Global Theory of Change and viewing the COVID-19 pandemic as a pivotal decision point in the life of SfD organizations, this study was concerned with how SfD organizations have innovated in a way that continued to serve their participants, as well as what strategies best aided the organization in remaining strong during the pandemic. The hope is that, in uncovering strategies that worked well during the pandemic, SfD organizations can become stronger, more flexible programs when faced with future challenges. With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore how SfD organizations were impacted by and forced to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How have SfD organizations been impacted by and adjusted to COVID-19 restrictions, specifically related to the areas of access, inclusion, content, and engagement?

RQ2: What innovative strategies were most successful in navigating the pandemic?

METHOD

This study utilized a narrative approach to qualitative research in which researchers collected accounts from participants and attempted to draw conclusions from those accounts (Creswell, 2007). That is, this study aimed to unpack how SfD programs were able to adapt to the pandemic and how lessons learned from the pandemic can be used moving forward from the perspective of those who experienced it. Additionally, a pragmatic epistemological approach was used in this study as researchers were concerned with the practical implications of the research (i.e., how can SfD practitioners use the information when facing any form of challenges or change). Details about participants, procedures, data analysis, and research positionality are presented in this section.

Organizations and Participants

In total, ten participants representing ten different SfD organizations took part in this study. A combination of convenience and purposeful sampling was used to recruit the SfD organizations. Specifically, each of the organizations operates in SfD in South Africa and is part of a community of practice group that meets once a month to discuss challenges, innovations, and funding within the field. The community of practice is open to SfD organizations operating across South Africa and is coordinated by a central organization that works to support and fund SfD organizations throughout the country. The monthly virtual meetings are open to any SfD organization or affiliate working in the country and are typically a combination of a presentation on a certain topic, followed by an open discussion forum. The members of the community of practice dictate the content of the meetings, and its intention is to be a collaborative group that makes all of SfD in South Africa better. This specific sample (convenience) seemed appropriate in studying this topic in that over 40% of SfD organizations operate on the African continent (Svensson & Woods, 2017), and South Africa specifically is a country with a high concentration of SfD organizations. The research team was also strategic in limiting the study to SfD organizations in one country, knowing that the pandemic resulted in differing country-wide restrictions and safety orders that might not have applied across borders.

The leaders of the community of practice group were informed of the study and then helped to identify organizations that may have interest in participating, opening it up to any involved in the monthly community of practice calls. In order to participate in this study, organizations had to be South African-based SfD programs that were active prior to the start of the pandemic and remained active in some capacity during the pandemic. Information about each of the organizations is presented in Table 1. Once the organizations were identified, purposeful selection was used to determine which individual within each organization would be best suited to help answer the research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Selection criteria dictated that the individual must work for the organization full-time, have been with the organization for at least one year prior to the start of the pandemic, and must have direct interaction with participants through programming.

Procedures

Once participants agreed to participate in the study, a one-on-one semi-structured interview was scheduled with one of

Table 1. Sample Demographics

Organization Pseudonym	Location	Sport/Activity	Participant Age Range	Gender Breakdown	Annual # Served
Amahle	Johannesburg	Multi-sport	6-18	60% m/40% f	450
Thabisa	Johannesburg	Boxing +	7-25	80% m/20% f	220
Mpho	Johannesburg, Cape Town	Soccer	5-25	60% m/40% f	500
Friedrich	All provinces	Multi-sport	5-25	68% m/32% f	15,000
Elna	Durban	Multi-sport (adaptive)	5-65	66% m/34% f	342
Lerato	Stellenbosch	Soccer, Futsal	8-18	58% m/42% f	48
Oratile	Port Elizabeth	Multi-sport	5-35	50% m/50% f	12,000
Kaya	Cape Town, Port Elizabeth	Surfing	10-25	60% m/ 40% f	1,500
Jabulani	Stellenbosch	Soccer	5-19	90% m/10% f	200
Imka	Cape Town	Circus	5-19	90% m/10% f	2,000

the members of the research team. Each member of the research team conducted five interviews via Zoom or telephone. All interviews were conducted between October and December 2020 when parts of South Africa were experiencing some form of lockdown due to the pandemic. An interview protocol was developed as an initial guide. The protocol was designed based on the Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020a) and consisted of a total of 19 questions divided into four sections that correspond with the four elements of the theory (Access, Inclusion, Content, and Engagement). Through consultation with a panel of three SfD practitioners, we operationalized the terms as follows:

- Access: Improved reliable access to diverse sources of programming
- Inclusion: Reduced systemic exclusion of groups
- Content: Greater availability of high-quality programming
- Engagement: Increased opportunities to critically engage with participants

As outlined in Figure 1, the definitions were only slightly altered from the wording in the original theory. The changes broadened the definitions beyond media applicability, to fit an inclusive programmatic-based audience. Three SfD practitioners were consulted on the wording to ensure it remained true to the Global Theory of Change's original definition, yet fully encapsulated primary priorities of SfD organizations. The interview questions that were created in the areas of access, inclusion, content and engagement, similarly adhered to the corresponding prompts outlined in the Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020a), and were refined through the three-member SfD practitioner panel.

In the Access section of the protocol, participants were asked about their communication and contact strategies pre- and during-pandemic (i.e., How have your communication strategies, both within your organization and with your program participants changed as a result of COVID-19?). Regarding Inclusion, program leaders were asked about their organization's inclusion criteria, and the impact the pandemic had on their beneficiaries (i.e., Have you expanded or reduced your population served in any way as a result of COVID-19?). Participants were asked about their organization's ability to deliver content during and after the stay-at-home orders in the Content section (i.e., What new or innovative content have you initiated as a result of the pandemic?). Finally, participants were asked about platforms and other strategies used to interact with beneficiaries before and during the pandemic in the Engagement section (i.e., What type of platforms have worked the best for you in engaging your population during the pandemic?). An additional section was added to encapsulate participants' overall thoughts on the pandemic and their organization's response and plans moving forward. Although the interview protocol was followed to ensure consistency across interviews, researchers also allowed room for additional questions to emerge based on participants' answers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The average length of the interviews was 40 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded through Zoom software or through a portable recording device. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and uploaded into ATLAS.ti for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a three-step systematic deductive approach (Gilgun, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this process, theory is used to make sense of the data. In the first step, a list of a priori codes were developed to reflect components of the Global Theory of Change and the interview protocol to guide the coding process (Saldaña, 2016). Both members of the research team worked together to come up with the a priori codes prior to the start of data analysis. For example, the a priori code Communication was developed based on the Global Theory of Change component Access and was related to interview questions regarding communication strategies before the pandemic and during the pandemic. Other examples of a priori codes included, *Reach/Recruitment* (related to *Inclusion*), and *Changes to Programming* (related to *Content*).

In the second step, researchers independently reviewed the interview transcripts line by line, assigning the a priori codes to chunks of data (Gilgun, 2005). Although the a priori codes were used, researchers allowed additional

codes to emerge by paying close attention to patterned regularities and crossover within data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). These additional codes were named and assigned based on the theoretical framework and relevance to the research questions.

For example, some of the codes that emerged during this step were *Sharing Ideas Between Organizations* and *Holistic Development.* This is also the point at which researchers met to assess whether saturation had been reached. As there was great consistency across interviews, the research team deemed 10 interviews sufficient and did not interview anyone further.

In the final stage, the research team met to compare codes. At this time, codes were combined and narrowed into final categories or themes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Connections between codes were determined based on the theoretical framework and research questions. This process resulted in two broad umbrellas (*Impact/Adjustment* and *Keys to Long-term Success*) and seven themes resulting from the data. Once themes were solidified by researchers, quotes were pulled to illustrate each coding category. Pseudonyms were used in the findings to protect the organizations' anonymity (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Researcher Reflexivity

In qualitative research, there is a potential for the data to be shaped by the prior assumptions and experiences of the researchers (Maxwell, 2013). The two researchers involved in this study both had previous experience working with SfD organizations, particularly in South Africa, and with some of the organizations involved in the current study. These previous relationships may have impacted participants' trust of the researchers and their willingness to talk openly about their organizations. Furthermore, the researchers' previous experiences may have led to assumptions about how the organizations operate.

The researchers were intentional throughout the process to minimize the effect of their prior assumptions and experiences. First, the interview protocol was developed paying close attention to the elements of the Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020a), rather than the thoughts and opinions of the researchers. Secondly, while an interview protocol was used, researchers were keen on allowing participants to guide the conversations in the way that they saw fit. Finally, during the data analysis process, the research team met regularly to ensure that the voices of participants were reflected through the codes and resultant themes. Based on these techniques, the researchers are confident that their own biases had little impact on the findings.

RESULTS

Results of this study indicated that the SfD organizations in this study were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to adjust in the areas of Access, Inclusion, Content, and Engagement. Furthermore, the results revealed that there were keys to long-term success that came out of the pandemic such as a new focus on partnerships, creativity and innovation, and the development of new content. These themes are detailed in the following sections.

Impact and Adjustment

Research question one was concerned with how SfD organizations were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how they were able to adjust to pandemic restrictions. Organizations were impacted in each of the four areas of the Global Theory of Change (Internews, 2020a): access, inclusion, content, and engagement. Table 2 depicts the findings related to each of these, direct quotes from participants to support the findings, and related discussion points.

Keys to Long-term Success

Research question two elicited findings related to some of the more positive and potentially unexpected outcomes of having to adjust to the pandemic due to stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines, which dramatically changed the way SfD organizations meet the needs of their participants. It attempted to dig into what strategies the program administrators thought most helped the organizations adjust successfully to the pandemic's restrictions, and ways in which the organizations innovated. Although programming was significantly interrupted, organizations were able to identify some positive consequences that resulted from the need to pivot in many ways. The three main themes that emerged as positive strategies for these organizations that will serve them well into the future include: the importance of partnerships, a focus on creativity and innovation, and an addition/renewal of mental health curriculum as part of their programming. Although these were all necessary survival strategies at the time of the interviews, in the heart of the pandemic, interviewees were also able to see how they helped to create stronger organizations that can lean on these ideas in the future to better serve their constituents.

Table 2. Impact and Adjustment Needs and Strategies (RQ1)

		Quote	Discussion Points and Related Literature
Access	No direct, in-person access	In hard lockdown, when COVID first hit, everyone was at home. Now, all of a sudden, you don't have any way of reaching the kids because your only line of communication contact is with the teachers (Elna).	Communication and programmatic access have been challenged during COVID (Borkowski et al., 2020; Silverman, 2020).
	Communication challenges	A small percentage of our people have internet access or disposable income to buy data for messaging or downloading content or whatever. So with the coaches and the staff, we have what we did immediately shift to remote working...So, shifting to Zoom and WhatsApp and video calls, but then that's not at all practical for the majority of the participants (Lerato).	
	Utilizing virtual communication	Obviously with COVID we had to find some way to stay in touch with our beneficiaries, so we set up WhatsApp groups with all the parents of children who's in our program, and we communicated with parents and shared with them the weekly activities we would have done on the beach, and have encouraged parents to share it with the children (Thabisa).	Fully virtual programming limits the reach due to financial, technological, and cultural barriers for some participants (Bates et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2020).
	Utilizing virtual platforms and social media	We started communicating a lot more, and mostly via online, social media, WhatsApp basically, because it's something that all the kids had access to and we were able to get funding to provide data to our kids (Mpho).	Others have found success adjusting to COVID challenges by shifting to virtual programming (Bates et al., 2021; Borkowski et al., 2020; Donnelly et al., 2020)
	Programming offered weekly through local access TV channel	With the TV show, like a big part of that was about trying to find a way to access the kids at home, in a free platform, because I think a lot of organizations, the natural thing was to want to revert to using social media and Internet. But the reality is most of the kids that we work with don't have access to internet or data reliably. Whereas most of them do have access to a television set and free TV channels. So that seemed to be the most effective way to reach them in their homes (Oratile).	
Inclusion	Drop in participant numbers due to new methods of programming	We also feel like because of some of the strategies that we used, we lost some kids and some members, because the teens particularly, what we realized is that the teens are not just about the food. We actually thought that because we go to communities where a lot of people are underprivileged, we'd think that the numbers would remain the same to some degree because of the food that we offer. But we found that with teens, the pride, I don't know, just they get so prideful to the point that they won't even come through for the food only, or the educational packs themselves (Kaya).	Several scholars have noted the negative impact pandemic would have on participation in sport programs (Bates et al., 2021; Elliot et al., 2021: Silverman, 2020).
	Drop in participant numbers as a trickle-down effect of other COVID-related issues	We did the survey to find that most parents who lost their jobs then had to move because the place we're in, is a place in transition. People come here to be closer to town, closer to their jobs, so they come here when they're working and they bring their kids with them. So the minute they lose their jobs, it means then they move with their kids (Amahle).	Silverman (2020) suggests many community-based sport organizations at risk of shutting down completely
	Increase in participant numbers due to new supports offered (e.g., food parcels)	I think during COVID, our kids saw kids coming and they told kids where they were going, so we just increased. They saw kids getting food to take home, so they also wanted to take food home. We've gone up from about 80 regulars to about 220 this past weekend (Thabisa).	Little existing research noting increased participation resulting from COVID.
	Increase in participant numbers due to new supports offered (e.g., food parcels)	We are also providing the incentives in the form of like in the food parcel to give to the participants after completing the programs or the sessions in our programs. I think that is also a way of trying to attract them or bring them into our programs. But also because we know that during this COVID-19, a lot of families or kids are struggling with food (Mpho).	Several others have found that supplementing food services during COVID has been a focus of SFD organizations (Borkowski et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2020); however, neither scholars note this resulting in an increase of participants.

Content	Limiting or fully cutting sport-specific content, to focus more on acute needs	We are using government facilities, so the rules are very, very strict. Super strict. So to some degree we couldn't actually do any physical activity...no physical activity at all. But, the main thing the parents were worried about was the academics, especially since the kids weren't able to go to school. So for them, our focus was and should be education, education, education, and nothing else." (Amahle).	Many sport programs shut down during COVID (Bates et al., 2021; Elliot et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2020; Warner & Martin, 2020)
	Reconceptualizing 'sport' when it can't look like it normally does	Hand/eye coordination for boccia is essential so one could drill back and look at ways and exercises to enhance the boccia kids' hand/eye coordination. That's what we're looking at,, how can we do what we can with what we've got? (Elna).	Some SFD programs have moved away from sport-specific programming during COVID (Dixon et al., 2020)
	Adding new forms of content to adjust to changing needs	We even managed to deliver $50,000-60,000 worth of food parcels to our direct beneficiaries during the hard lockdown where you were not allowed to leave your homes. Which was never part of our plan, to deliver food parcels (Jabulani).	Dixon et al. (2020) and Borkowski et al. (2020) similarly found educational advancement and provision of essential supplies took priority over other things in SFD organizations during COVID.
Engagement	General lack of engagement due to not seeing participants regularly/in-person	It was extremely difficult to engage participants during this time. We did not get to see many of the kids during lockdown, and when we did get in contact with them, it was almost impossible to get them to do anything (Jabulani).	Several scholars have noted the negative impact pandemic would have on participation and engagement in sport programs (Bates et al., 2021; Elliot et al., 2021: Silverman, 2020).
	Empowered older youth to help engage younger ones	We designated our older youth as "psychological foot soldiers" who were responsible for being an ongoing source of support and connection for nutrition and education for the younger ones (Thabisa).	Phillips and Schulenkorf (2016) discussed the use of peer coaches and officials as change agents within SFD programs.
	Empowered coaches to connect and engage more regularly	We managed to get the coaches onboard and then they understood what was supposed to be done. Fortunately, the call center is still in place where we are reaching out to participants in groups of 10 (Mpho).	Coaching is key to SFD success. Schulenkorf (2016) has advocated for engaging community members as 'change agents,' perhaps extending to coaches?
	Better connection to parents to check in on how their youth are engaging	Obviously with COVID we had to find some way to stay in touch with our beneficiaries, so we set up WhatsApp groups with all the parents of children who's in our program, and we communicated with parents and shared with them the weekly activities we would have done on the beach, and have encouraged parents to share it with the children (Kaya).	Non-pandemic related SFD research indicates parental support is critical to the success of SFD's (Lindsey & Grattan, 2012; McSweeney, 2020); Dixon et al. (2020) found that parental involvement helped engage youth during the pandemic.

Partnerships

The importance of partnerships was highlighted by nearly all participants. Because of the variety of organizations included in this study, partnerships look different throughout the organizations, but exist with groups such as schools, non-profit organizations, funding bodies, and even similar programs abroad. During the pandemic, especially at a time when stay-at-home orders were in place, organizations were more fully committed to relying on others for ideas, best practices, and even just conversations that allowed them to relate to others who were experiencing similar challenges. Several participants alluded to the fact that SfD has not always operated in a collaborative way, and the pandemic helped them realize that there was a better, more collaborative way to help all involved. Friedrich stated:

One thing I can say, one thing we've learned from this pandemic is that collaboration was important over this period, working together. Before a lot of organizations were protecting their piece of the pie because it's all obviously funding and so forth, so no one wants to really share information, whatever. And where this pandemic people open to sharing best practices and resources that they've used and found useful or that wasn't as useful.

Mpho similarly viewed SfD pre-pandemic as more of a competitive environment where organizations were trying to do it all alone and protect their own expertise, but views it differently now:

And then yeah, because sometimes doing things by yourself, thinking that you know better than others, it's not a good way. Because we need to always keep on networking with other organizations so that then we can learn how they do things differently. So yeah, it's one of the things that we are

also doing as an organization to keep our partnership going with other organizations, so that then we can learn from them, gain experience.

Other participants historically operated from a more collaborative spirit but recognized an enhanced dependence on partners during the pandemic. The need to be able to provide continued programming and support to their participants led to a reliance on partners with more experience or resources that enhanced what they were already doing. Thabisa commented:

And it was also done in partnerships with... The private schools we worked with obviously had a lot more educational resources and online learning platforms than the schools that some of our kids were going to, so they also allowed the kids to access those. They gave them special access.

Because they could not see the kids daily, as they had pre-pandemic, they tapped into partners who had valuable resources that allowed them to stay connected and engaged with the youth in a different way. Oratile felt that managing programming through a pandemic highlighted just how valuable their existing partnerships were:

But for us, it's been accentuated during this period with the pandemic, and we've really benefited from working like partnering with other organizations in this period. Also, it's definitely made us realize more the value of doing that and trying to continue to do it. So that one, I would say, a positive from this period that we will try and keep going for sure, is some of the partnerships that we've formed, that have enabled us to deepen our impact and also broaden our impact in terms of the number of beneficiaries that we can reach and what we can achieve.

The takeaway seemed to be an accentuated value on partnership-building and partnership-management, all focused around the very best way to serve their constituents. Whether it was a newly formed belief in the importance of partnerships or a renewed commitment to existing partners, nearly every organization saw this as an important strategy in managing through the pandemic. Even more so, they communicated the need for this to be a continued commitment, recognizing that through partnerships you can better serve your program participants, and can learn from the expertise of others rather than having to do everything yourself.

Creativity/Innovation

A second significant theme, a bright spot that emerged out of the pandemic, was the recognition that creativity and innovation were central characteristics in organizations most able to shift programming to continue to support beneficiaries during the pandemic. The words 'innovation' and/or 'creativity' were cited by all 10 organizations and appeared 39 times in the interviews in total. Participants acknowledged that the pandemic almost forced a sense of creativity and innovation, but that they rose to the occasion and emerged with a stronger belief in themselves and their organizations. Similar sentiments were shared by multiple organizations. Elna stated, "Something that I've really learned is that our team has a lot more to offer than...it's almost been an opportunity to reveal hidden talents and skills. In our ordinary roles, they don't really get an opportunity to flourish and so that's been great." Imka similarly said, "I think it's about not being complacent, being creative, thinking out of the box. And I think appreciating what we do have here, because I think a lot of people took for granted, it's always going to be this normal." Lerato noted, "I think it just strengthened the sense of resilience and innovation and creative problem solving that we have. So, I mean, who knows what's going to happen in 2021 or even the rest of 2020. But we feel like we're very adaptable, we're very resilient."

Although all participants mentioned this sense of creativity and innovation as a point of pride, some provided specific examples to reinforce how important it was to survive as an organization amid stay-at-home orders and social distancing regulations. Thabisa provided this example:

But we were very reliant on the physical-ness of our gym. The four walls, the boxing bags, the gloves, the equipment, and everything was about being in contact with the kids. That was really in that space. What we realized is that we can do quite a lot of what we need to without the actual physical gym. We've done a lot of park activations and just outside training sessions, which achieve the same thing.

Others provided similar examples such as encouraging youth to create exercise equipment out of items they could find in their home, which is a type of program enhancement that will remain valuable into the future, even when traditional programming returns. Another organization innovated by partnering with a local TV station during the stay-at-home order. Through this partnership, they were able to broadcast physical activity and life skills programming to over 10,000 households for free, reaching a much broader audience than their traditional programming. This innovative idea resulted in a trickle down of other positive outcomes:

But it [pandemic] forced some level of innovation and we

definitely try to embrace that and not lose some of the innovation and different ways of working that we've developed in this period. So things like doing the TV show, to reach further appeal. And coming up with more innovative ways of reaching our beneficiaries. And the interesting thing is that both of those two learning points have a benefit, have clearly been positive aspects for our funders, because we actually raised more money this year even though we lost some funding in this period (Oratile).

Collectively, organizations felt their ability to be creative and innovative was a driving force of successfully navigating the pandemic. Organizations spoke about the renewed level of importance they will place on this moving forward. There was a sense of pride among the organizations for being able to survive the pandemic as an organization that is nearly 100% dependent on in-person programming, and without utilizing creative-problem solving, they would not have been as successful as they have been. Thabisa summed it up as, "Yeah, I speak for all of us in my organization when I say we're really proud of how we innovated during that time of national disaster, and how we were able to keep a source of connection and support open for our kids."

New Content and Emerging Social Issues

The final theme related to pandemic survival strategies revolved around awareness of developing needs among youth. Primarily, the recognition that programming has to change in order to best serve the youth. Organizations included in this study focused their programming on a variety of social issues including gender inequity, health education, disability services, life skill development, and violence, among others. Although each highlight certain social issues, they all operate from a place of holistic development. Mental health arose as a focal point in the interviews. Nine out of the 10 organizations that participated in this study mentioned mental health as an emerging social issue in South Africa, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Although they will continue to focus on their primary organizational goals, participants communicated the importance of addressing mental health to best support their youth holistically. Lerato said:

Well, I guess a big one, which seems to be big globally is just the mental health aspect of it. So whether it's the isolation or anxiety or whatever. I think those things compound the continuous trauma that most of them live with. So that would be going forward something that we're paying attention to...I think as part of the growth process also is the kids are getting older. It's something that we really want to be more in tune with. So during the lockdown, we did work with one of our partners that's developing mental health curriculum.

The pandemic created rising rates of mental health issues, especially in young people (Kross, 2020), and South Africa was no different. Through regular connection with their participants, SfD organizations saw an increasing need for mental health to be a baseline piece of their curriculum and were working toward strategies to integrate this. Some of the organizations took an initial approach toward mental health involving more frequent check-ins with participants to get a sense of how they were doing. Imka noted:

Our programs team also did a round of calls every three weeks or four weeks to the individual participants. So, we would literally spend a week phoning each and every child we could get hold of and ask them "What's your need?" "How are the family doing?" So, we detect not only physical health, but mental health as well. And just that connection to show that we were still thinking of them.

Oratile's organization similarly recognized emerging mental health challenges through regular communication with participants, noting a need for more focus in that area, "And then the other one that we're starting to also put a bit more of a focus on in and look at in a bit more detail is mental health and emotional well-being related to that [gender-based violence]." Recognition of mental health challenges was consistent across organizations, but strategies for response to it varied.

Some organizations, noting this need, worked toward better training their coaches and/or partnering with organizations who already held the expertise in mental health curriculum. Lerato commented, "So implementing some of that curriculum which will also entail, I think, the coaches and the staff getting more training in how to offer that sort of psychosocial, emotional support, develop trauma informed programs. So I think that's a big thing. That's probably one of the big issues. I think other issues were compounded or exacerbated in the lockdown." Kaya noted, "The training shifted a little bit from curriculum training for how to implement the program and a little bit more to…we focused this year a lot more on theories around mental health, theories around our service delivery, around working with children, but also on young people developing themselves." Finally, Oratile's organization relied on a partner with existing expertise in mental health, stating "We've teamed up with another organization who specialize in that kind of programming. And we're working together with them to do the curriculum with some of our participants, but then also to include elements of their programming in our own curriculums and ongoing activities." The organizations

included in this study showed a responsiveness to emerging social issues in order to holistically serve their participants.

DISCUSSION

It is no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way SfD organizations conduct business, at least temporarily, if not permanently. Although many of these forced changes were negative (e.g., less access and engagement of participants, restrictions to in-person programming), the current study attempted to focus not only on what happened and how SfD organizations reacted, but also what positives or innovative practices may have resulted from the forced changes. At such a pivotal change point in the life of many SfD organizations, what did administrators learn that will make them a stronger organization that can better serve participants into the future?

As noted in the *Impact and Adjustment* umbrella of findings, access, inclusion, content, and engagement were all strongly impacted by the pandemic. Interestingly, though, there were both positive and negative resulting actions, with some organizations noting that the changes resulted in more participants, new programming strategies, and altered ways of serving their youth. Similarly, in the *Keys to Long-term Success* umbrella of themes, organizations recognized that they have become stronger program deliverers, partners, and leaders through the challenges they faced and overcame during the pandemic. In March of 2020 the United Nations suggested that two keys to surviving the pandemic would be collaboration and creativity (United Nations, 2020a), both of which emerged clearly as findings in this study.

In terms of collaboration, scholars have historically talked about the importance of partnerships in SfD, though often alluding to strategic public-private or government-NGO partnerships focused on sustainability of individual SfD programs (e.g., MacIntosh et al., 2016; Schulenkorf, 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2019). The United Nations, in considering sport an important catalyst for reaching its Sustainable Development Goals, specifically talks about strategic partnerships in SDG17. They note, "Sport can catalyze, build and strengthen multi-stakeholder networks and partnerships for sustainable development and peace goals, involving and bringing together the public, governments, donors, NGOs, sport organizations, the private sector, academia and the media" (United Nations, 2020b, p. 10). What successful partnerships look like, however, is not specified by the UN, but the current study sheds light on this topic, especially related to collaborating with other SfD organizations.

Partnerships and collaborations are nothing new to SfD, yet most SfD research in this area focuses on collaborating with organizations outside of SfD, such as funders, academics, governments, or non-sport NGO's (e.g., Marlier et al., 2020; Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2018). Some of the organizations in the current study talked about partners that come from outside of sport, such as funders who adjusted support levels to support programmatic needs, or a domestic violence specialty group that was able to provide curriculum around this topic. However, most of the collaborations highlighted in the interviews were with other SfD organizations in South Africa.

Svensson and Loat (2019) discuss collaboration as 'bridge-building,' discussing SfD partnerships broadly, including collaborations forming outside of and within SfD. But generally, there has been a lack of focus around how SfD organizations can better collaborate and/or partner with other SfD organizations for the advancement of all youth and constituents. Welty Peachey et al. (2018) outlined some of the reasons collaborations might present challenges (e.g., competition for resources, unequal power relations, misaligned goals), yet the current study suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic may have brought out more strategic thought around SfD's being more collaborative, rather than competitive, with one another. In short, there are challenges, but the positive outcomes likely outweigh the negatives, so finding models that work will be key. The current study makes a strong case for a model that might be a good starting point: Communities of Practice.

The South African community of practice that served as the population for this study is clearly seeing positive results in terms of collaboration within SfD. The group, which meets via Zoom once per month, typically leans on its own 'experts' within the group to share best practices and lead discussions around challenges they are facing. The result has been a network of like-minded individuals who can support one another as needed in creating strong programming and assessment. As an example, outside of the community of practice monthly calls, participants in this study mentioned contacting other program administrators from within the group to share mental health resources, brainstorm ideas for stay-at-home programming, discuss how to shift funding to meet participant needs, and even consider sharing resources for collaborative projects. These are relatively simple ideas that are having great impacts within programs and are happening simply because the community of practice exists under the belief that everyone will become stronger through teamwork and collaboration.

For SfD deliverers who do not have a formal community of

practice or may work in an area far from other SfD organizations, some models exist that can serve as a guide for those hoping to better embrace the current study's findings. BeyondSport attempts to bring together SfD organizations across the globe to develop a more sustainable, collaborative movement (BeyondSport, 2021). Its newsletter shares job openings, best practices, and stories of success that can be beneficial to others doing similar work. Although this organization provides valuable resources and support to enhance collaboration, it might feel too global for some who want to make local connections that might be more culturally relevant. Initiating a local community of practice may be a jumping off point. This does takes leadership, management, and initiative from a few to get it going, but it could pay dividends into the future, as indicated by the current study. Ultimately, partnerships within SfD may lead to fully collaborative programming or even joint organizations who can serve more participants through more activities; the possibilities are limitless but certainly more attention needs to be given to the idea of within-SfD collaborations, as they appear to have greatly helped the organizations in the current study.

Another important implication for SfD practitioners relates to the creativity and innovation findings. Innovative practices and underpinnings are familiar to SfD. Svensson and colleagues have explored innovation in SfD extensively related to how internal conditions support innovation (Svensson & Mahoney, 2020), the impact of external stakeholders on innovation (Svensson & Hambrick, 2019), outcomes of social innovation (Svensson et al., 2020), and leadership's impact on innovation (Svensson et al., 2019), among other topics. Dixon and Svensson (2019) note that a unique balance of structure and flexibility is important to the success of SfD organizations. This type of leadership, difficulty balancing two competing needs, may play a role in innovation and creativity emergence within SfD organizations. Similarly, Ratten (2020) posits the entrepreneurial spirit, often linked to innovation and creativity, has the potential to play a central role in SfD's re-emergence from COVID-19. The current study's findings demonstrate the importance of creativity in SfD managing through and beyond the pandemic.

Interestingly, the statements made by participants in the current study related to creativity and innovation felt, at times, like realizations the organizations came to as a result of the need brought on by the pandemic. Statements such as "Something that I've really learned is that our team actually has a lot more to offer," "I think it just strengthened the sense of resilience and innovation and creative problem solving that we have," and "I speak for all of us in my organization when I say we're really proud of how we innovated during that time of national disaster" demonstrate the almost unexpected nature of these realizations. Participants talked about 'hidden talents' emerging and taking 'pride' in how they had been able to adapt. These comments indicate that perhaps the levels of creativity needed to manage through the pandemic were always there, but not fully utilized until they were most needed. Svensson and Mahoney's (2020) organizational conditions for social innovation and Svensson et al.'s (2020) antecedents to social innovation indicate important internal factors that promote innovation, such as leadership, infrastructure, and financial resources, among others. The current study raises the question of development versus emergence of social innovation. That is, how much might an organization's culture of innovation emerge through a necessity for change, such as that created by the pandemic?

One of the major changes created by the pandemic related *to new content and emerging social issues*, specifically mental health challenges. Although awareness around mental health worldwide is on the rise, the pandemic certainly exacerbated the issue (Pearl, 2020; Pons et al., 2020), and previous scholars (Hughes et al., 2020), as well as the current study, have noted the need for SfD programs to integrate coping strategies into their curriculum. This is clearly a long-term commitment from the organizations and one that they feel will better support their participants even after fully emerging from the pandemic. The ability for these organizations to recognize and be open to changing issues and ways of supporting their youth falls in line with Ettekal and Agans' (2020) call to "be intentional about discovering the needs, challenges, and opportunities that arise during the pandemic for youth and the practitioners who serve them" (p. 15). The organizations interviewed in the current study seemed strongly committed to this ideal.

Although nine of the ten organizations included in this study recognized mental health as an emerging participant need, not all were sure how to combat the issue or integrate it into their curriculum. They were all committed to helping, yet the strategy for doing so was less clear. The organizations presented levels of support ranging from more regular check-ins to see how participants were doing to consulting with mental health specialists on how best to permanently integrate prevention into their curriculum. Consulting with other SfD organizations on their strategies, indicative of the collaborative environment suggested above, may be an initial strategy for navigating through how best to support emerging needs.

It is important to note, beyond this, that mental health was the emerging social issue that manifested itself acutely

during the pandemic. So, although improved support for mental health challenges is a take-away for SfD organizations, so too is the idea of being committed to a central mission while also leaving room for growth and development as an organization. Dixon and Svensson (2019) note, "the organization's evolution through key points in its early life course provides evidence of the delicate balance needed between structure and flexibility in hybrid organizations" (p. 463). When a social issue among constituents emerges so acutely, there is a clear need to adjust and address it.

A final note related to the implications of this study has to do with the Global Theory of Change. The Global Theory of Change is not an academic theory, perse, but rather a theory used in practice when working with non-profit organizations across the globe. As previously noted, Internews, who conceptualized the Global Theory of Change, has worked with and utilized this framework in over 150 countries with non-profit partners focused on advancing society (Internews, 2020b). Their work, although media-focused, is not dissimilar to the work of SfD organizations across the globe, though the social element and delivery through sport differ. It also appeared a very practical encapsulation of the various aspects SfD organizations should be considering in approaching their work.

The authors considered more well-known and widely utilized SfD theories in conceptualizing this study but did not feel any of them truly fit the direct focus here on organizational change related to participant needs. For instance, Sport for Development Theory (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) seemed to have too broad a focus. A hybridity model (Svensson, 2017) covers organizational change, but is focused both internally and externally, considering various dynamics at play; that did not seem appropriate given the focus here specifically on meeting the needs of participants exclusively, so we sought a narrower focus. This process continued and left the research team still searching, eventually landing on the Global Theory of Change. Its focus on four primary areas (access, content, inclusion, engagement), all of which are relevant and applicable to every SfD organization in thinking about reaching and serving participants, appeared ideal in constructing an interview protocol that would meet the needs of this study.

Theoretically, elements within the theory were interspersed throughout several theories that have been well used in SfD literature (e.g., Positive Youth Development, Lerner et al., 2005; Social Capital Theory, DeGraaf & Jordan, 2003; Sport for Development Theory, Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Practically, having implemented SfD programming in the field, the authors felt the foci of the Global Theory of Change aligned well with the purpose of SfD in serving participants. Therefore, this theory, and specifically the content areas of access, content, inclusion and engagement, served as a guide to this study. Although much more work needs to be done to determine its long-term effectiveness as a theory applied in SfD, the results of the current study indicate that it hit the mark, evidenced by the follow up interview question of "are there any other major areas we did not discuss that you would like to include?". None of the organizations interviewed suggested additions. Given that, the Global Theory of Change worked well as a foundation for the interview guide here, though there is certainly more work to be done in advocating for it as a potential theoretical guide in SfD.

Directions for Future Research

There are many future directions to take this study. Depending on how long restrictions remain in place from the pandemic, there is continued information we can glean from how SfD organizations continue to adapt. Beyond the pandemic, however, there will certainly be times of drastic change and uncertainty in the future, and better understanding some of the major takeaways from this study would be worthwhile. For instance, how do organizations create collaborative partnerships that are successful and how can SfD's shift from seeing themselves as competitive for limited resources and rather collaborative for the greater good? Bridge-building research provides some initial strategies (Svensson & Loat, 2019), but this is worthy of future exploration.

In terms of creativity and innovation, what makes an organization innovative and how does the leader's impact influence this? Although the current study indicated strategies that seemed to be successful in navigating the pandemic, they did not dial deeply into the 'how,' which is a critical next step. Some respondents briefly mentioned leadership within the culture of the organizations as playing a role, which is a topic explored in the SfD literature (e.g., Svensson et al., 2019; Svensson et al., 2020; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2016). The current study provides evidence that organizations were acutely tuned into change during the pandemic, so better investigating the 'how' of what worked well is warranted. In addition, in terms of change, how do originations remain structured yet flexible, mission driven yet responsive to changing needs? Some emerging needs occur acutely, while other are the result of mission-shift over time. Understanding how innovation plays a role in these questions warrants further study.

Theoretically, the need for diverse theories in SfD continues (Haudenhuyse et al., 2020; LeCrom et al., 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2019). As noted by Schulenkorf et al. (2016), a small number of theories (e.g., positive youth development, social capital) are widely used in SfD literature. Schulenkorf and Spaaij (2015) state:

A major challenge for SDP researchers, then, is to develop and apply theory that is meaningful and revealing within the particular context under study, while refraining from over-using, recycling, or salami-slicing concepts for studies that add minimal theoretical or practical value (p. 73).

The theory used in the current study has yet to be academically validated but provided a very practically applicable starting point for the interviews conducted. Testing or reconceptualizing it in a way one might approach a scale development project (validation, for example), should be considered with the Global Theory of Change, and perhaps even other untested theories that might lay a solid groundwork for SfD.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the COVID-19 pandemic, for many, has been one of the most life-altering events they have yet to experience. Although there is hope for a return to normalcy, in many ways organizations will never truly return to the way they conducted business prior to the pandemic. The findings of this study indicate that, perhaps, we do not want to return to business as usual, as we can learn from many of the strategies, we were forced to enlist in 2020 and beyond. SfD will likely always depend on face-to-face interaction, but the findings of the current study would argue that a full return to face-to-face interaction, coupled with what has been learned through the pandemic, will make for stronger organizations who can better serve their constituents in the long run.

Some of the key takeaways highlighted in this study include an enhanced collaborative spirit, a focus on creating an innovative organization, and responsiveness to emerging needs. In terms of collaboration, findings suggest that there is strength in building inter-SfD organizational bridges to better serve the needs of constituents. Communities of practice, cross-organization programming, and collective resource development may be strategies that can work to enhance the work of all SfD organizations, rather than viewing one another as competition for scarce resources. Innovation and creativity were terms that cut across all participants in this study and are clearly topics that are front of mind for SfD organizations in managing through the pandemic. Innovation has been well researched in SfD, but the pandemic may have provided a platform for it to emerge in organizations who had not previously thought about its importance. Finally, related to innovation, organizations identified the emerging need of addressing mental health amongst their constituents. This study indicated that organizations can identify emerging needs, and want to respond to them, but may not always know the best way to do so. Both collaboration and innovation might play a role in an organization's readiness to be responsive to changing programmatic needs. In conclusion, the pandemic forced drastic change in SfD organizations. These changes were acute and drastic, yet many organizations found a way to adjust. If organizations can continue to build on the changes they made, integrating collaboration and innovation into their daily practices, they will emerge stronger in terms of how they are able to serve their participants and respond to ever-changing needs.

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