

# Sport for Peace and Development Theory

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## Aim of paper and research questions

Given the increasing global trend of using sport as a medium to resolve global issues, the field of Sport Management faces new challenges. The absence of substantial scientific evidence, and of an undergirding theoretical framework of how sports can serve as an institution for positive social change indicate significant gaps between theory and practice (Lyras, 2007; Thibault, 2008; UN, 2003; 2005). Scholars from our field recognize the need for an interdisciplinary approach to advance our understanding of the global sport phenomena and to assist sport managers in more effectively engaging in non-traditional sport practices (Chalip, 2006; Frisby, 2004) related to sport for peace and development (Lyras, 2007; Thibault, 2008). Chalip (2006) also suggested that sport management researchers should follow two directions, “one that tests the relevance and application of theories derived from other disciplines and one that is grounded in sport phenomena” (p.1). Given this foundation, the purpose of this paper is to propose a Sport for Peace and Development Theory (SPDT), derived from the theories of other disciplines (Organizational Change, Social, Educational and Humanistic Psychology) and grounded in evidence provided from the field. It is hoped that the proposed SPDT will provide a foundation to more effectively design and assess initiatives that use sport to promote positive social change.

## Literature review

According to the SPDT, if we claim that sport can serve as “a good medicine” for a number of social issues (e.g. cross-cultural intolerance, racism and conflict) - then social scientists have to utilize scientific assessment procedures to identify three components, (a) The Content, (b) The Process and (c) The Outcomes of sport interventions. The Content refers to the type of sports and educational themes of Sport for Development initiatives; The Process refers to the context and the methodology that can be utilized to maximize positive outcomes; and the Outcomes refers to the impacts of the sport experience across time and space. These three components can be better explained through the lens of a number of theories from organizational change (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Nadler & Tushman, 1999; Slack, 1996; Slack & Hinings, 1992), social psychology (Allport, 1995; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), humanistic psychology (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 1996; Maslow, 1970; 1971) and impacts assessment methodology (Burnett & Uys, 2000; Lyras, 2007).

## Research design and data analysis

To address the gap that exists between sport for peace and development theory and practices, Lyras and colleagues designed and implemented a number of action research initiatives with positive social change indicators. Through their field work with the Doves Olympic Movement in Cyprus, a country with a long history of inter-ethnic conflict, they identified a number of organizational and educational components that facilitated positive social change. Evidence from the field was provided by utilizing mixed methods data collection and analysis, using pre and post intervention assessment, focus groups and in depth interviews. Data was collected from 488 subjects (Greek and Turkish Cypriot boys and girls, aged 12-16) and 46 instructors and program coordinators (half Greek and Turkish Cypriot male and female aged 19-50) that participated in different sport for peace and development initiatives as part of the Doves

Project (summer camps, leadership camps, community based initiatives) the last four years (2005-2008). Quantitative data was analysed with t-tests and repeated measures MANOVA and grounded theory methodology was applied to analyse the results in a number of Doves Project initiatives.

### Results

Both quantitative and qualitative data was analysed under the lens of an inter-disciplinary theory to better understand and explain sport for peace and development theory and practice. The findings from the four-year research project were published in a number of national and international sport and peace conference proceedings around the globe (Lyras, 2003; 2005; 2007; Lyras, Yiannakis & Kartakoullis, 2005; 2006; Lyras & Kotziamani, 2008; Lyras, Votsis, Kotziamani & Charalambidou, 2009). Given this evidence, a SPDT is proposed.

### Discussion and conclusion

SPDT combines theories from a number of different disciplines to better describe, explain and predict sport practices related to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG). This theory was developed so that a number of known and unknown variables that influence change (e.g., internal and external factors, context of the sport experience) can be manipulated to identify and better explain cause and effect relationships in sport for development initiatives. Such an approach, as suggested by field experimental methodology, will provide evidence regarding best practices to more effectively promote positive change at all levels (psychological, social, societal). Additionally, SPDT emphasizes the need to establish a scientific mindset in every sport for peace and development initiative to determine effectiveness and impact across time and space. Such information can have significant value for both sport policy makers and practitioners to pursue advancement of evidence-based program and policy designs related to the U.N. M.D.Gs; thus, continually contributing to the “Best Practice in Sport and Event Management” embraced by the 2009 EASM.

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