DESIGNED TO MOVE: EVALUATING A COMMUNITY-BASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INTERVENTION PROGRAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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Synopsis:
Sport has been promoted as a solution to a seemingly endless list of long-standing social issues, and a widespread mythopoeic view of sport has limited our understanding of the processes that lead to developmental outcomes (Coalter, 2013). One of the more pressing social issues that many sport organizations around the word have sought to remedy is youth obesity. In light of the obesity epidemic, Sport-for-Development (S4D) has been used as a lens through which to view the developmental (i.e., health-related) objectives sport, physical activity, and play can provide. For example, Bailey et al. (2013) identified strong evidence of physical activity providing health benefits with large cohort studies establishing a 20% to 40% reduction in mortality, as well as growing evidence that physical activity is related to multiple demands of lifelong functioning and development. Governments, non-governmental organizations, national, and international sports organizations, universities, and schools have increasingly adopted the use of S4D to achieve health and participation outcomes (Kidd, 2008). Accordingly, this study builds on the existing S4D work by adopting a multi-phase, mixed-method approach to assess the beneficiary outcomes a physical activity intervention program in the United Kingdom provided.

Abstract:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Robust and valid Sport 4 Development (S4D) research requires a broad relational understanding of program processes, participant responses, and resulting impacts. A thorough approach to S4D research and evaluation would address the question of "… what sports, social relationships, processes, and experiences lead to impacts for whom, in what contexts, and to what extent can these meaningfully be regarded as development" (Coalter, 2013, p. 3)? Within the S4D literature, there is a lack of understanding of how sport can contribute to social change (Coalter, 2013; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Existing

research has produced "… rather ambiguous and inconclusive findings" (Coalter, 2007, p. 1) and according to Hartmann and Kwauk (2011), "… with little more than anecdotal evidence, beliefs about the impact of sport are driven mainly by heartfelt narratives and evocative images" (p. 285). There is a lack of a clear operational conception of how S4D programs are predicted or expected to function (Hartmann, 2003), and there has been a lack of consideration of the conditions for success and a failure to provide information on the full complexities of interventions (Coalter, 2007). S4D research has failed to provide strategic guidelines, models or frameworks for the role of sport in social change (Schulenkorf, 2012). This has been the case because researchers have lacked access to S4D programs, participants, and administrators, thereby limiting their ability to conduct a holistic evaluation (Hartmann, 2003). Appropriately, this study seeks to address these gaps by considering the both development and delivery processes and the associated impacts the program provides.

METHOD

The researchers were granted access to holistically assess physical activity intervention among London youth aged 12-15 years old – Nike's "Designed to Move" physical activity agenda. The catalyst for Nike's engagement was in response to the trend of physical inactivity, which is well-established in developed economies lime the UK. For example, in the UK, physical activity levels have dropped by 20% from 1961 to 2005 and are projected to drop an additional 15% by 2030 (Ng & Popkin, 2012). The researchers were commissioned by the program funders to undertake the evaluation. This allowed for the researchers to the theoretical understand how physical activity might contribute to social change through delivery processes and impacts. The three-phase, year-long analysis consists of: (1) document analyses and administrator interviews (pre-program), (2) participant focus groups to uncover the complexities of the S4D intervention, considering the relationship between delivery and outcomes to conceptualize how the S4D program functions and the conditions for success (mid- and post-program), (3) questionnaires to assess various attitudinal and health-related outcomes (pre- and post-program).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the time of this abstract submission, program administrator data, mid-program participant focus group data, and the pre-program questionnaire data had been collected. Administrator interview data (N=4) revealed a focused strategy to help alleviate the obesity trend in London. The focus group data (N=3 focus groups of 5 participants each) showed several key mid-program trends: (1) breaking the habit of physical inactivity, (2) healthier habits and perceived fitness, (3) assumed outcomes from a physical activity intervention, (4) quality movements for physical literacy, and (5) inclusive and passionate delivery for engaged participants. By the time of the presentation, all of the data will be analyzed. As a result, it is still early to draw any definitive conclusions about overall programmatic impacts. That said, however, our initial evaluation suggests that the program is having a positive impact on participants.

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