

Social Action Through Community Sport: A Case Study Illustration Using Creative Analytic Practice

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Theoretical background or literature review

Community sport organizations (CSOs), also known as local voluntary sport clubs, represent a central structure that facilitates athlete development both on and off the field. While more research has been dedicated to uncovering the different ways that sport systems can influence athlete success on the field (e.g., De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, & Van Bottenburg, 2015), other outcomes developed through club-based participation are also of increasing interest to CSO managers, social policy, and researchers. These include social capital, community connectedness, and a variety of other psycho-social and community benefits. Similarly, Misener and Babiak (2015) uncovered multiple ways that CSOs are engaging in social issues such as environmental campaigns, humanitarian efforts, and youth justice initiatives. Their exploratory research draws on institutional theory and provides a foundation for understanding the norms, values, and pressures that CSOs face to engage in community issues alongside the provision of sport. While this exploratory research provides insight into the rationale to engage in social action, there remains a lack of evidence related to how social action through sport influences and is influenced by the youth athletes themselves and how this may impact athletes' civic behavior. This study draws on literature in positive youth development as well as civic and charitable engagement to offer new insight in response to this gap in the community sport literature.

Aim of the research

This presentation is based on a larger project exploring the role of community sport in developing charitable action among youth athletes in Canada. The project examines multiple stakeholder views on a partnership between one sport club and a registered Canadian charity whereby athletes, coaches, and parents are engaged in charitable giving with and through their local CSO. This presentation addresses a two-fold purpose: (1) to outline the key findings of the study related to how the partnership is developing charitable engagement among youth athletes, and (2) to offer a unique illustration and discussion of a contemporary qualitative methodology called creative analytic practice (cf. Richardson, 2000).

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

The study employs an intrinsic case study methodology for study design and data collection and creative analytic practice (Richardson, 2000) for data analysis and representation. The focal organization for the case is a community hockey club in Ontario, Canada that has been partnering with an international charity for three years to promote charitable giving among families of players aged 11–14, and engage athletes from a middle-upper class community in a social cause. The mandate of the charitable partner is to provide orthopaedic surgeries for children in Uganda that would otherwise not be able to afford surgical treatment. Data were collected through open-ended interviews with club organizers and coaches (total 6 participants), as well as two focus groups with youth players (5/group) and two groups of parents (6/group) from one team that has participated in the sport-charity partnership for 3 seasons. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim. Following this initial inductive coding, the researcher engaged in creative analytic practice in order to refine the themes and generate an innovative representation of the data in the form of an illustrated children's book.

Richardson (2000) explained that creative analytic practice is a process that involves expressing what one has learned in research through evocative and creative writing techniques across literary and artistic genres. These may include performance pieces, poems, screenplay, visual techniques, and other types of conversational and critical representations (Parry & Johnson, 2007). The process used in this study included a "storyboard" workshop where previous interview and focus group participants discussed and refined the emergent themes and created a storyline and ideas for illustration which reflected the themes. A professional illustrator then created a template for the book which was presented back to participants for further insight and refinement. During the storyboard workshop and the subsequent creation of the book, the researcher and participants continued to evaluate the representation according to substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expression of a reality (Berbary & Johnson, 2012).

Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions

The presentation will outline and discuss the key findings of the study that shed light into the role of community sport in developing charitable engagement among youth athletes. For example, the sport-charity partnership impacted athletes' understanding of civic and charitable action related to generosity, recognition of privilege, the shared experience of giving within families, and team cohesion. Through presenting and discussing the creative analytic process, this presentation offers both methodological and conceptual advancement to the field of sport management.

References

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