

Social Responsibility in Sport Management: Coming Down from the Ivory Tower

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Session 18: Socio-Cultural Workshop (75-minute)

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2:00 PM - 3:15 PM

During the 2006 Zeigler Award Lecture, Inglis (2007) described a journey through the "creative tensions" within the sport management field. Her words reminded listeners of previous Zeigler lectures calling upon the field to "promote social change by challenging dominant ways of thinking and acting that benefit those in power" (Frisby, 2004). Chalip drew our focus toward the redesign of sport programs to achieve health outcomes, the positive socialization of children, and community development (Chalip, 2005). Pastore (2002) pushed us to utilize a "different lens" to mentor those in the field of sport management. As a group, we have responded to their collective challenge through the research that continues to connect us to our communities that lie outside the walls of our sometimes cloistered institutions. This community connection reflects a commitment to "inclusive excellence" (The Association of American Colleges and Universities Inclusive Excellence Initiative) or a multi-layered process through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; institutional functioning; local and global community engagement; and workforce development. This symposium will highlight socially inclusive research and programming in which sport management faculty and graduate students are currently engaged as well as highlight the possibility of increasing the social significance of research and teaching in sport management through inclusion. By sharing the work of the symposium participants and relevant work of others in the sport industry, we will emphasize social inclusion as active, intentional and persistent engagement with people and communities that increases self-awareness, knowledge, and understanding of individuals, systems, and institutions. The individual components of the symposium are as follows:

1. Youth development research has found that youth will become more engaged and can benefit more from a model that incorporates them as decision makers. Power sharing and participation can help bridge the gap between simply preventing problems to promoting development and encouraging engagement (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2002). This segment focuses on a program connecting University of Connecticut students and student-athletes with youths in Hartford, CT through school-based, after school, and summer activities (Rhodes, Grossman, & Roffman, 2002, p. 9) combining sport, life skills, and mentoring while promoting a healthy life choices for children of color. Husky Sport's goal is to expose youths, especially females, to a variety of sports and physical activity. While involved in sport and physical activity, participants also develop healthier lifestyles and form positive relationships with current UConn students and athletes who serve as mentors. The following outcomes have been evaluated: self-esteem/self-worth, accountability/responsibility, connections to community/belonging, knowledge/acquisition of health/life skills, application of those skills, and active participation in planning/recognizing one's own influence (Pittman, et al., 2002).
2. Rates of childhood obesity have reached a critical level in the U.S. Thirty seven percent of children between the ages of 6 - 11 are identified as at risk for overweight (age specific BMI at 85th percentile) (NHANES, 2004). Physical activity has been demonstrated to be a key contributor to the prevention of and reduction in overweight and has been linked to positive cognitive outcomes for children in elementary and middle school (Coe, Pivarnik, Womack, Reeves, & Malina, 2006). The purpose of this presentation is to describe a possible mechanism through which sport management scholars, in conjunction with professional sport organizations, can engage in research and community based activities to promote positive lifestyle choices to help address the childhood obesity epidemic. Using programs implemented by the Connecticut Sun, in conjunction with the WNBA "Be Smart, Be Fit, Be Yourself" Campaign, we will discuss how sport management scholars can collaborate with professional sport organizations to reach populations at risk for overweight and obesity.
3. The multi-million dollar salaries of coaches, players and front office executive personnel give the distinct impression that people who work in sport are well paid. At the same time, the concept of the "minimum wage" has been largely ignored in the sport human resource management literature and sport management curricular materials. By expanding diversity and "making excellence inclusive," the sport management classroom has the potential to embrace all students and all socio-economic backgrounds in sport. The aspect of social responsibility presented here describes the student response from exposure to the "behind the scene" jobs in the sport industry in which thousands of workers engage for poverty level wages. Students reflect on

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their experiences after spending quality observational time with the lowest paid workers in a sport organization.

4. Doves Olympic Movement is an educational sport initiative (Lyras, 2003) that aims to foster the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations by using the power of sport to promote active and responsible local-global citizens. The Doves project was designed with an interdisciplinary approach by utilizing theories from humanistic psychology, educational psychology and organizational change. During the last two years, the Doves project brought together for the first time of the Cyprus history more than 250 Greek and Turkish Cypriot youth and instructors in residential Summer Camps and used Olympism to develop "inter- ethnic tolerance and acceptance; friendships among members of both communities, and patterns of working together in the pursuit of common goals" (Lyras, Yiannakis & Kartakoullis, 2005, p. 2). The participants, were exposed in the "four projects methodology" (Lyras, Yiannakis & Kartakoullis 2005; 2006), which aim the transfer of "knowledge gained" into practice by utilizing individual interests and drives (existing thoughts and motives) in collective initiatives (new groups) and action plans (socially responsible behaviors). Through this symposium I will present the interdisciplinary nature and the activities of the Doves project and discuss the implications of such practices in the field of sport management.

5. One area where sport managers may exert their influence is programming after-school and summer sports programs. "The Race is On: Elementary Edition" is a program used a multi-disciplinary approach to reach youth in SafeKey programs throughout the Las Vegas valley. The focus of the program was a walking race around the world. While walking through each target city/country, youth also learned positive nutrition habits and prepared healthy foods native to that particular country. Additionally, the programming focused on activities related to the country the youth were visiting. Not only did this program increase youths' awareness of the importance of physical activity and nutrition, it also opened their eyes to the diversity of their own environment as well those around the world.

6. Academic and popular literature suggests a growing situation in America's workforce where individuals experience increasing stress and strain that leads to poor health, yet they have little available time to participate in sport and exercise that may actually help alleviate some of the stress and the deleterious health effects. While this trend affects both men and women, it is especially pertinent to working mothers as they are often subject to heightened demands of child and homecare. The demands placed on these women at work and home suggest a real need for programs designed to reduce stress and increase health through physical activity. "Fit Again" was a walking-running program designed to meet the needs of working mothers. It was a free program complete with social connections and free childcare on-site. Although the program had limited participation, those who engaged felt it was invaluable. Conduct of the program also highlighted some challenges of hands-on activities of this nature including the need for committed volunteers and personal involvement.

In the spirit of the 2006 NASSM visit to Kansas City and the Negro League Museum, we have realized in the words of Jackie Robinson that "life is not important, except for the impact it has on other lives." Recently, the Sport Business Journal (2006) published a special issue of Sports and Social Responsibility that asked the question "can a bouncing ball save the globe?" The author eventually concluded, as have we, that while sport cannot end the violence that characterizes our world, sport "can make the world a better place," one in which social responsibility and inclusiveness set the tone for sport management educators and students.