

**Olympism and social change: From theory into practice and from practice back to theory**

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Abstract 293**

Previous Zeigler Award lectures have called upon the sport management field to "promote social change by challenging dominant ways of thinking" (Frisby, 2004) and to redesign our sport programs to achieve health outcomes, positive socialization of children and community development (Chalip, 2005). In essence, we are challenged to use sport as a positive social change agent. As such, our perceptions and experiences of social change are framed in terms of ideology, socialization, empowerment, equity, access to participation and increased decision-making power (Burnett, 2001).

According to the Olympic Charter, the Olympic Games were revived to provide a foundation where sports could serve as a vehicle for educational reform, cross-cultural understanding, personal development and social change (IOC, 1994). Despite this ambitious mission statement of the International Olympic Committee, many have suggested the effectiveness of sport to promote positive social change during the last century has been minimal (Binder, 2001; Wamsley & Heine, 1996). 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 (Binder, 2001; UN, 2005). Thus, the purpose of this presentation is twofold. First, we will suggest a theoretical framework underlying sport and social change derived from the attributes, theoretical orientation and conceptual components of a sport intervention (Doves Project) that promotes positive social change (Lyras, 2007). Second, based on these components, we will then compare and contrast two projects (Doves Olympic Movement and World Scholar-Athlete Games) that use Olympism to promote positive social change as we advance suggestions for future research and practice.

Chalip (2006) 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). Based on these guidelines, Lyras and colleagues designed theory-driven interventions (Lyras, 2003; Lyras, Yiannakis & Kartakoullis 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) drawn from organizational theory, humanistic psychology, intergroup contact theory, and educational psychology (Lyras, 2007). According to Lyras (2007), sport initiatives that use Olympism (a blend of sport, education, arts and cultural enrichment) to facilitate personal development and social change can be analyzed in three phases: (a) the pre-event experience, (b) the main event experience and (c) the after-event experience. These phases can be best described with an interdisciplinary approach consisting of four components: (a) organizational component, (b) sport component, (c) educational component, and (d) cultural enrichment component (Lyras, 2007). These components refer to organizational aspects, the environmental setting, and the content and the quality of the experience. This analysis can have practical and research implications by applying theories from other disciplines to the four components (Lyras, 2007). The (a) organizational component of sport intervention that promotes social change can be analyzed through the lens of organizational change theory (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnett & Uys, 2000; Nadler & Tushman, 1999; Slack, 1996; Slack & Hinings, 1992; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). The (b) sport component can be better understood by merging literature from sports in regions where conflict exists (Bairner, 1999; Cronin, 1997; Saunders & Sugden, 1997; Sugden & Harvie, 1995; Trew, Kremer, Gallagher, Scully & Ogle, 1997) and research on physical activities and moral development (Beedy, 1997; Bredemeier & Shields, 2001; Devereaux, 1971; Ebbeck & Gibbons, 2003; Gibbons & Ebbeck, 1997). Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989, 1994, 2000), flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 1996; Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999) and problem based learning (Brown, & King, 2000; Brown, Lyras & Ioannou, 2007) undergird the (c) educational component. Finally the (d) cultural enrichment component can be investigated with literature on Olympism (Binder, 2001; IOC, 1984) and global citizenship education (Amara, Aquilina, Henry & Taylor, 2005; Fountain, 1999; Reich & Pivovarov, 1994).

To provide theoretical and practical implications of the posited theoretical framework, we will utilize a case study approach, analyzing and comparing two alternative sport programs working for social and attitudinal change, one at the global level and one locally. Acknowledging that sport has the power to contribute to personal and social development, the intersection of these two global and local programs is underpinned by the theory that Olympism, as it was originally intended, can build strong bonds of friendship, increase ethnic tolerance and build bridges among cultures (Binder, 2001; IOC, 1984; UN 2002; 2003; 2005). On the global level, the World Scholar-Athlete Games brings together 2,500 high school scholar-athletes from 175 countries every

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four years to take part in sport competitions and participate in cultural and educational activities. The mission of the Games is to bring together the future leaders of the world to break down stereotypes, foster peace and understanding, and effect attitudinal and social change. In contrast to most international sporting events, there are no national teams at the Games - participants from diverse countries and cultures are placed on the same teams or cultural activity groups. More than 15,000 young people have taken part in the program since 1993. At the local level, the Doves Olympic Movement (Lyras, 2003) is working towards the same goals in Cyprus (Lyras, 2007; Lyras, Yiannakas & Kartakoullis, 2003, 2004, 2005). Since 1974, Cyprus has been a divided nation with discord between the Greek and Turkish communities. When the checkpoints separating the two communities were opened in 2003, the opportunity arose for programs to work at bringing together youth from both communities to build bridges and foster understanding. Since 2005, the Doves Project has brought more than 500 Greek and Turkish young people and instructors together for a number of sport and social activities, using Olympism to develop inter-ethnic tolerance and acceptance; friendships among members of both communities; and patterns of working together in pursuit of common goals.

The relationship between sport and new social movements is strong and growing, as sport has become a critical avenue for the development of transnational networks among individuals, which in turn develops a sense of community initiated through sport that transcends national boundaries (Harvey & Houle, 1994). Thus, alternatives to the dominant forms of sport, such as the Doves Program and World Scholar-Athlete Games, are created out of the values of new social movements. Additionally, these two programs and the proposed theoretical framework embrace the 2008 NASSM theme of "Good Sport Makes Good Business," showcasing good works and best practices of alternative sport development and delivery modalities. Through this presentation, we will provide (a) practical suggestions and (b) an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that can be utilized for the design, implementation and assessment of sport initiatives whose goals are to embrace the power of sport to promote positive social change.