Program theory of sport-related intervention: A multiple case study of sport-related youth violence prevention programs

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Sport-related intervention programs have expanded in many countries with the long-standing belief that sport can decrease youth criminal and other antisocial behaviors (Collins, 2003; Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Pitter & Andrews, 1997). Intervention researchers, however, have questioned the use of sport as a way of generating positive social outcomes (Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, & Neckerman, 1995; Farringthon, 1998; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Hartmann, 2003). They claim that little study has provided the theoretical and empirical rationale for the use of sport in social intervention programs.

In this regard, the present study examines the utility of sport as a tool of social intervention programs. Normative implications for effective design and implementation for sport-related social intervention programs are derived from the literature (e.g., Caldwell & Baldwin, 2003; Crabbe, 2000; Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1995; Hartmann, 2003; Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Werch, Moore, & DiClemente, 2003) and the examination of a type of sport-related youth violence prevention programs (i.e., Teacher-Student-Together programs) that had been executed at the 10 middle schools in Korea.

Guided by Lipsey's (1983) theory-driven approach and Eisenhardt's (1989) theory building process, this study identifies common patterns existing in the 2 most successful Teacher-Student-Together programs among the 10 programs. These common patterns are further examined by comparison to those of the 2 least successful Teacher-Student-Together programs among the 10 programs.

The results of this study indicate that not all sport-related intervention activities are effective at preventing at-risk youths from involvement in violent behaviors. The most successful sport-related violence prevention programs had more structured and stronger intensity, treated more risk factors, combined one type of program activities (i.e., sport) with others (i.e., education and other experiences) synergistically, and generated more mediating variables and outcomes. With regard to the use of sport in sport-related violence prevention programs, this study suggests that sport could be effectively manipulated to reduce constraints (i.e., sport activities could reduce labeling effect), develop a positive sense of self (i.e., sport activities could be a medium for providing a social setting to empower at-risk youths), develop positive social relationships (i.e., sport activities could be a medium for bringing various school stakeholders into the activities), improve social skills (i.e., sport could provide a natural social space to learn and acquire positive social skills), and create new, positive group norms and identity (i.e., sport could provide alternatives for antisocial group norms and identity).

Consequently, this study constructs Program Theory of Sport-Related Intervention through which it discusses when and how sport managers are able to use sport as a vehicle for preventing youth violence and other types of antisocial behaviors. It also implicates how this program theory is grounded in "Sport-focused model" (Chalip, 2006, p. 3) and how "sport management can show its social concern as it develops tenable theory" (Zeigler, 2007, p. 297).