

## A Conceptual Model Examining Professional Athletes' Motives to Engage in Social Entrepreneurship

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Sport can be viewed as a platform for driving social change (Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). In the past 10 years, the relationship between the professional sport industry and social responsibility has garnered much scholarly and public attention (Babiak, Mills, Tainsky, & Juravich 2012; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Sheth & Babiak, 2010; Sports Philanthropy Project, 2007). Due to their high visibility professional athletes have the unique opportunity to influence, encourage, and leverage their stardom to impact social issues (Babiak et al., 2012).

For example, Billie Jean King, one of the greatest women's tennis players, believes she was born with a destiny to change the world. Creating gender equity in sports and enhancing athletic opportunities for all women became her lifelong devotion (Schwartz, n.d.). Her view of herself as a changemaker and her sense of injustice in sport helped foster her entrepreneurial spirit. King not only created the first professional women's tennis tour, she also founded social initiatives such as the Women's Sport Foundation and GreenSlam, an environmental initiative for the sports industry. Her socially driven entrepreneurial efforts and impact on social change help to make King a social entrepreneur.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a growing concern. McWilliams and Siegel (2001) define CSR as actions of social good that extend beyond what is required by society and law. Baron (2007) utilized Friedman's (1970) model to suggest social entrepreneurs form CSR organizations. Baron (2007) stated that entrepreneurs are individuals who identify a problem and opportunity to establish an innovative firm. All entrepreneurs initiate and address change, however, the distinction in social entrepreneurship is that the primary goal of the entrepreneur is promoting social change and overall well-being (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2011). The Ashoka Foundation, which was designed specifically to fund and promote social entrepreneurs, defined social entrepreneurs as "individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems" (Okpara & Halkias, 2011, p.11). Though social entrepreneurship is not a new field, it is an emerging area of academic inquiry (Okpara & Halkias, 2011). While a vast array of research focuses on defining social entrepreneurship, the idea that social entrepreneurs leverage their resources to address a social problem remains constant (Dakin et al., 2010). Ashoka characterizes a social entrepreneur based on his or her (a) idea (b) creativity (c) entrepreneurial quality and (d) social impact of the idea.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) examines one's intentions to engage in a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1985; 1991) such as entrepreneurial activities. Intentions serve as one of the strongest predictors of planned behavior (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). Billie Jean King's mission for solving social problems and promoting social change did not lead her to founding the self-driven Billie Jean King Foundation; instead, she created the Women's Sport Foundation with an inherent social mission. To date, there is a paucity of conceptual thought and empirical research examining the relationship between professional athletes and social entrepreneurship.

We contend that social entrepreneurship is its own text warranting the need for further conceptual thought about the mission and motives of professional athlete social entrepreneurship. The purpose for this conceptual paper, therefore, is to draw from TPB (Ajzen, 1985; 1991) to understand the underlying motives and influences of professional athletes that lead to social entrepreneurial behavior. Specifically, the TPB and the Ashoka definition of social entrepreneurs serve as guides to understand the influences and identify the motivations of professional athletes to engage in social entrepreneurship. The TPB has been used to predict philanthropic decisions by athletes (Babiak et al., 2012), charitable donations by individuals (Smith & McSweeney, 2007), intentions and behavior for leisure activities (Ajzen & Driver, 1992) and engagement in physical activity (Trafimow & Trafimow, 1998). The proposed model offers a unique approach to examine the underlying motivations prompting professional athletes, similar to King, to engage in a lifelong commitment to solving the world's greatest social issues.

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For the proposed model, we suggest the following six influences and motivations derived through the TPB lead one towards becoming a social entrepreneur as outlined by Ashoka: attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, self-identity, moral norms, and past behavior. Attitude represents an individual's positive or negative evaluations of performing a particular behavior. A social entrepreneur identifies an opportunity to solve a social issue and is driven by his or her motivation for promoting social change. Subjective norms are one's perceptions of societal pressures or influences on that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The expectations on professional athletes to demonstrate social responsibility have continued to heighten in American society (Roy & Graeff, 2003), therefore pressuring athletes to utilize their resources and influence to impact social change. The type of behavior an individual is intending to perform and the nature of the situation itself are represented through perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Social entrepreneurs rarely allow the external environment to impact his or her decision to launch an enterprise (Dacin, et al., 2011). The degree to which behavior is a central component to one's life is represented by self-identity (Sparks & Sheperd, 1992), which connects to the lifelong devotion of social entrepreneurs to solving a social problem. Ajezen (1991) added moral norms to the TPB to measure an individual's feelings of personal responsibility for performance. Barendsen and Gardner (2004) stated that many social entrepreneurs live the life of the social change they are striving to reform. Personal values can be a catalyst for social entrepreneurship (Hemingway, 2005). Past behavior by the individual has been found to be a strong predictor of future behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). We suggest that an athlete's past behavior with regards to business and social issues will serve as a key driver in his or her future innovative solutions to social issues. Finally, we have added resources to the conceptual model as a seventh influence. Dacin et al. (2011) called for more research on a social entrepreneur's ability to leverage resources. We utilized Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of social capital to adopt resources. Social capital is defined as social structures such as networks, norms, and social trust facilitated through social connectedness (Putnam, 2000). Bridging social networks provides an individual "the potential to leverage a broader set of resources" (Welty Peachy, Cohen, Borland, & Lyras, 2011, p.3). Engaging these resources is a distinguishing aspect of social entrepreneurship (Dacin et al., 2011).

Given the importance of social change, and the heightened stature of professional athletes, we suggest this model not only adds to the literature in social entrepreneurship but also serves a practical purpose for sport managers. Understanding the motives and intentions underlying these social entrepreneurial behaviors can lead to education and development for nurturing future social entrepreneurs. Wilson (2009) cited the global need for the development of an entrepreneurial culture that provides individuals with suitable skills, attitudes, and behaviors. This model has the potential to serve as a foundation for future research in athlete entrepreneurship, whether social or commercial. Previous literature states that the mission, motives, and challenges of social entrepreneurs warrant the need for social entrepreneurship to be considered as its own field (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Hockerts, 2006; Murphy & Coombes, 2009; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006). We hope to further this contention and stimulate research by offering a model connecting motives and social entrepreneurship among professional athletes.