Assessing the Impact of an Olympic-Themed Sport-for-Development Initiative

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Sport for Development - Other (Youth Sport) 20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Abstract 2017-038

Thursday, June 1, 2017
1:20 PM
Room: Maroon Peak

Introduction
Sport for Development (SFD) initiatives have used sport as a vehicle for individual, community, national, and international development in such agenda as public health, social inclusion, inter-cultural understanding, and peace building (Lytras, 2007; Sugden, 2006; Gasser & Levinsen, 2004). In addition, with sport’s appeal to young people (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007), SFD initiatives have been favored by many practitioners to teach children about social skills, companionship, goal-setting, fair play, and respect for others (Macintosh et al., 2016; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). However, scholarship suggests that more empirical evidence is needed to ascertain the potential efficacy of SFD programs over the long-term, along with providing a clearer picture of how these programs help potentially achieve positive impact (Coalter, 2013; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). In order to address this gap, we initiated a three-month long SFD program designed and implemented by undergraduate and graduate students at a large, Midwestern University in the US in partnership with a local Boys and Girls Club. Designed around four of the Olympic and Paralympic values along with cultural, educational, and sport components, the program has a goal of teaching children in 3rd to 5th grade, primarily from more disadvantaged neighborhoods, about friendship, determination, courage, and equality. As such, the purpose of this study is to assess if and how an Olympic-themed SFD initiative influences the development of friendship, determination, courage, and respect for equality in its participants. Two research questions were developed: (a) What is the impact of this Olympic-themed SFD intervention on participants’ development of friendship, determination, courage, and respect for equality?; and (b) How are the program design components related to these potential outcomes?

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review
Sport for Development (SFD) Theory (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) is framing this research project. SFD Theory was developed to help understand the structures, conditions, and program components of SFD interventions that facilitate positive outcomes and social change. This SFD initiative utilized five core components of SFD Theory that are (1) impacts assessment, (2) organizational, (3) sport and physical activity; (4) educational, and (5) cultural enrichment. To illustrate, the first component, impacts assessment, indicates that multilevel change should be evaluated to assess the effectiveness of SFD interventions in promoting social change. The second component (organizational) proposes that all stakeholders in SFD interventions should be actively involved in shaping and leading the initiative. As the third component of SFD Theory, the sport and physical activity aspect should be introduced along with inclusive play format and an educationally oriented, quality program. The fourth component (educational) elucidates that SFD initiatives should combine sport with educational programming to help participants and stakeholders transfer knowledge gained through the sport intervention to the real world. The last component, cultural enrichment, suggests that SFD initiatives should offer cultural engagement for stakeholders to complement the sport and educational components to best facilitate long-term impact. The majority of scholarly work in SFD has engaged in monitoring and evaluation in order to ascertain the efficacy of sport in facilitating various outcomes (Welty Peachey, Liras, Borland, & Cohen, 2013; Sherry & Strybosch, 2012; Sherry, 2010). More importantly, however, scholarship has indicated that SFD initiatives can have the potential to achieve positive outcomes if designed and managed well (Schulenkorf, 2012). As such, this three-month longitudinal project will help answer the call for evidence as well as need to ascertain the connection between program design components and specific outcomes.

Methods
A mixed methods approach is being employed comprised of pre/post-test surveys with children participants (n=31, average age=9.5, male=54.8%, African American=80.6%), personal interviews with children and parents, and direct observations throughout the program. For the quantitative portion, an online survey was administered to children on
the first day of the intervention and will be administered on the last day of intervention. The survey measures friendship (Sherer & Maddux, 1982) with 6 items ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; and determination (Sherer & Maddux, 1982) with a 17-item, 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). Courage is being measured with a 6-item, 4-point Likert scale (Howard & Alipour, 2014) ranging from 1=not important at all to 4=really important; and lastly, equality (Green et al., 2007) is being evaluated with a 3-item, 4-point Likert scale (1=not important at all, 4=really important) for attitude and a 3-item, 4-point Likert scale (1=never, 4=always) for behavior. Qualitatively, two techniques will be employed. First, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with all children in the program and their parents directly upon program conclusion to gain an understanding of children’s experiences, the relationship between program components and potential impact, and parents’ perception of program impact. Three months after the program, a second interview will be conducted with parents to ascertain if the potential impact of the program is still being observed in their children. Interview guides are informed by SFD theory. Second, direct observations of all program activities over 3 months are being conducted by 4 investigators, for the purpose of triangulating observations with interview and survey results. All data collection will be complete by March 2017. To analyze the survey data, MANOVA will be employed to test for the differences in means between pre- and post-test scores. Interviews and field notes will be coded into themes and patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) drawn from SFD theory (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011).

Findings and Discussion
We expect to find pre-post-post- positive change in the children participants. Specifically, it is expected that children will develop more and higher quality friendships, become more determined in their endeavors, develop more courage, and gain a higher degree of respect for equality. Our preliminary findings from direct observations substantiate these expectations. To be specific, we observed that the children are more willing to mingle with other peers and keep focused on their endeavors in achieving a group task compared to their behavior during the first month of the program. We also anticipate parents reporting that their children are continuing to improve their behavior and attitudes with regards to these four values 3 months after program conclusion. We expect to find that it was the complement of sport, cultural, and educational activities working together that facilitated outcomes, and that without any one component, the overall impact of the program will be reduced. However, we also expect to find that specific components are related to specific outcomes. For example, direct observations are showing that the sport component is influential in developing equality and determination, although not all participants are demonstrating these qualities. It is being observed that the cultural component of fine arts and music plays a key role in friendship development. Theoretically, this research will contribute to a better understanding of the program components of SFD interventions that facilitate various outcomes, an area of research in SFD that scholars have identified as critical for helping to advance theory in the field (Coalter, 2013; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). A complete set of findings with pre-post surveys, post interviews, and direct observations will be presented at the 2017 NASSM Conference. Theoretical and practical implications, as well as future research directions, will be discussed.