Examining Shared Leadership in a Sport for Development and Peace Coalition

Per G. Svensson, Louisiana State University
Seungmin Kang, Louisiana State University

Sport for Development - Other (Other)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Saturday, June 9, 2018
10:35 AM
Room: Annapolis C

The increased scholarly attention given to Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) has resulted in a growing body of knowledge regarding different managerial aspects associated with sport for social change efforts. Recent studies have examined motivations of internal stakeholders (Welty Peachey, Lyras, Cohen, Bruening, & Cunningham, 2014; Welty Peachey, Musser, Shin, & Cohen, 2017), organizational values (MacIntosh & Spence, 2012), the emergence of alternative organizational structures and legal forms (Svensson & Seifried, 2017), the ability of SDP leaders to leverage a set of capacities for implementing SDP programs and achieving desired social change outcomes (Svensson & Hambrick, 2016; Svensson, Hancock, & Hums, 2017), and local community perspectives on how SDP initiatives are structured and implemented (Schulenkorf, Sugden, & Burdsey, 2014). However, little remains known about the role of different types of leadership in SDP (Svensson, 2017). Still, Welty Peachey and Burton (2017) have argued that “due to the focal missions of SDP organizations…the style of leadership needed to effectively guide an SDP organization may be different than that which is needed to lead sport organizations in other sectors” (p. 126). Yet few empirical studies in the literature have directly explored leadership in SDP (Wells & Welty Peachey, 2016).

Leadership is often conceptualized from a positional perspective in terms of the influence of an individual on others (Pearce & Manz, 2005). In recent years, however, more and more leadership scholars have begun to consider leadership as a collective phenomenon where leadership is shared or distributed across multiple individuals (e.g., Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Hoch & Dulebohn, 2013; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Yammarino, Salas, Serban, Shirreffs, & Shuffler, 2012). A shared leadership perspective may be of particular value for SDP considering the complex nature of targeted social issues and the prevalence of diverse inter-organizational relationships (Giulianotti, Hognestad, & Spaaij, 2016; Lindsey, 2013; MacIntosh, Arellano, & Forneris, 2016; Sugden, 2010; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Shin, & Fusaro, 2017).

The present study is part of a larger longitudinal research project that explores the nature of a inter-organizational coalition in SDP. This study specifically focuses on examining the role of shared leadership in the success of a coalition and determinants for the development of collective leadership in SDP. Specifically, this purpose will be addressed through the following research questions:

RQ1: What role do SDP practitioners perceive the concept of shared leadership serves in a SDP coalition?

RQ2: What organizational factors may enable or inhibit the development of shared leadership?

RQ3: What benefits or outcomes do SDP practitioners associate with shared leadership?

A qualitative research approach is used for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). The inter-organizational coalition examined in this study is part of Laureus Sport for Good Foundation’s Model City initiative. In addition to drawing on over two years of field observations during member meetings and special events, additional semi-structured interviews will also be conducted with representatives (staff members and/or board members) of organizations involved in the inter-organizational coalition (Gillham, 2000; Hays & Singh, 2011). These interviews will be completed during November 2017 – January 2018. It is important to conduct these individually rather than gather data through focus groups during member meetings to minimize potential social desirability bias. The researchers will interview the individual(s) that represent each member organization in the coalition. In most cases, this is the Executive Director, but there are some exceptions. In some cases, an organization also has multiple representatives actively involved in the inter-organizational coalition. Key stakeholders include six organizations that form a steering group and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation providing the backbone support for the coalition. These entities receive annual financial support and additional help with capacity building. An additional 14
organizations are also currently involved in the broader coalition although their tenure and level of engagement varies. All of these member organizations are being contacted for participation in this study.

The goal of these interviews is to gather their perceptions on the role of shared leadership in a SDP coalition, factors that influence whether or not shared leadership is developed, and the perceived benefits or outcomes associated with the concept of shared leadership. The researchers are recording interviews using two digital devices and will have them professionally transcribed. Both researchers will independently analyze the interview transcripts through a two-phase process (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2013; Tracy, 2010). Initial coding strategies will be employed in the first phase to inductively identify emergent concepts. Following a comparison of initial codes, the second phase will include more focused coding to identify themes and sub-themes regarding the three research questions.

Findings from this study are expected to contribute to our understanding of leadership in SDP (Wells & Welty Peachey, 2016; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017). Examining the concept of shared leadership in an inter-organizational coalition will also build on prior SDP scholarship regarding collaboration by highlighting the role of shared leadership for achieving collective goals (Hayhurst & Frisby, 2010; Lindsey, 2013; MacIntosh et al., 2016; Welty Peachey et al., 2017). Studies examining collaboration involving nonprofit sport organizations have previously pointed to the critical role of mutuality and balance for meaningful outcomes to be achieved (Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Marlier et al., 2015; Misener & Doherty, 2013). Findings from this study are expected to help in identifying how SDP practitioners may potentially develop meaningful and balanced collaborative structures by sharing leadership roles and responsibilities.