Behavioral Economics in Sport for Development and Peace

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Sport for Development - Other (Community Sport)

20-minute oral presentation (including questions)

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2:20 PM
Room: Napoleon A3

Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) is transforming from a relatively nascent movement into a widely recognized field, with organizations operating grassroots SDP initiatives in over 120 countries (Svensson & Woods, 2017). However, the questions that plagued the SDP movement early on still exist today, with ongoing concerns regarding theory development and application (e.g., Massey & Whitley, 2018; Welty Peachey, Schlenkorf, & Spaaij, 2017), neocolonialism (e.g., Lindsey, 2017; Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2011), pathways for change (e.g., unfounded, linear, isolationist, individualistic; Coalter, 2015; Schlenkorf & Spaaij, 2015), and outcomes (e.g., vague, evangelical; Langer, 2015; Whitley et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers have called for more focus on organizations' managerial structures, processes, and behaviors (Schlenkorf, 2017), especially given the challenges and stresses which SDP initiatives face, from low capacity levels and scarce resources to uncertain environmental conditions (e.g., closing of the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace). While this demands innovative solutions by SDP practitioners, other actors in the SDP field should also consider their role in promoting innovation and advancing SDP practice.

In this presentation, the role of funders in the SDP field will be examined, as the funding landscape (e.g., vision, priorities, funding requirements, reporting structures) significantly influences organizational behavior and has the potential to drive innovation. While the focus on funders typically centers on critiques and limitations (e.g., funding relationships founded on inequitable power dynamics; ownership of research and evaluative processes; Coalter, 2013; Harris & Adams, 2016; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Sherry, Schlenkorf, Seal, Nicholson, & Hoye, 2017), there is great potential for funders to help transform the field of SDP in meaningful, sustainable, efficacious, and ethical ways. This presentation will consider potential routes for affecting this type of change, based on principles from the field of behavioral economics. Specifically, nine tools for soft organizational change will be outlined, including the use of incentives, norms, defaults, priming, and affect. These tools target the two general approaches for behavioral change in recent years: those which seek to change cognitions (i.e., information provision) and those which seek to change the context (i.e., choice architecture). These nine robust tools will be described as they relate to influencing SDP organizational change through both information provision and choice architecture. The presentation will include specific strategies that funders (and other actors in SDP) can translate into their everyday practice, along with future considerations for both practice and research.