

Sport-for-development: A comprehensive analysis of theoretical and conceptual advancements

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the field of sport-for-development (SFD) has experienced significant growth and diversification across research and practice. In this review paper, the authors provide a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the theoretical and conceptual developments within SFD, addressing a gap in the literature. Following a sport-focused review of SFD literature, the authors first identify five theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have emerged from within the SFD space. As a second step, they analyze and discuss scholarly work that has utilized these theories and frameworks. Building on a comparison of key messages, themes, and concerns, the authors highlight that to date, limited SFD scholarship has truly applied, extended, or challenged existing frameworks and conceptualizations. Motivated by this review, they posit several conceptual advancements, and offer directions for future research and theoretical development.

Keywords: sport-for-development, literature review, theory building, conceptual advancements, research directions

1 Introduction

The field of sport-for-development (SFD) has experienced significant advancements in recent years, in both research and practice (Schulenkorf, 2017). In contrast to sport development practices that focus on the improvement of athletic skills and pathways toward professional sport, Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) defined SFD as:

the use of sport to exert a positive influence on public health, the socialization of children, youth and adults, the social inclusion of the disadvantaged, the economic development of regions and states, and on fostering intercultural exchange and conflict resolution. (p. 311)

From its origins in the ancient Olympic Games and sport-based recovery programs for wounded and returning veterans from World War I (Burnett, 2001), the contemporary SFD space is occupied by approximately 1,000 organizations across the globe that seek to use sport to achieve development outcomes (Svensson & Woods, 2017). Academic scholarship has kept pace, with researchers from a variety of disciplines engaging in conceptual and empirical work across myriad aspects of SFD, exploring topics such as social capital development, social inclusion/exclusion, the role of sport in cross-cultural understanding and peace building, effective partnerships, organizational capacity, and leadership issues, among many others (see Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016 for a comprehensive review of SFD scholarship). Scholars have also taken a critical approach to much of this research, identifying the neocolonial tendencies of many SFD organizations (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011) and challenging an evangelical approach to development whereby sport is championed as solving societal issues without empirical evidence to substantiate these claims (Coalter, 2007, 2013a; Sugden, 2010).

In this review paper, we focus on the theoretical and conceptual developments within SFD. To ground this exploration and review, it is helpful to draw from Chalip's (2006), who iterated the importance of both the derivative model of theoretical framing and the sport-focused model. The derivative model refers to when theories from outside one's primary discipline (i.e., SFD) are utilized to frame empirical work; this can be important as it allows scholars to confirm or disconfirm these theories within the discipline and establish boundary conditions. In contrast, a sport-focused model places specific emphasis on the home discipline of sport management, or as we may suggest in this context, the SFD field. As such, sport-focused theories derived from within the discipline itself are critical in helping to legitimize a field, as "there must be something about sport that renders distinctive concerns, foci, or procedures when sport is managed" (Chalip, 2006, p. 3).

Other sport management scholars have reinforced Chalip's thinking, highlighting that the uniqueness of sport should feature strongly in sport management theoretical development (Cunningham, 2013; Fink 2013). Zeigler (2007) further suggested that social institutions must have an underlying theory to justify their continued existence, and that it is thus imperative for the sport management discipline to demonstrate social concern as it develops theory. As such, our review also engages with – and relates back to – scholarship that has articulated and championed the value of good theory development in sport management more widely. Good theory should be insightful (Fink, 2013), have testable propositions that specify how constructs relate to one another, and have strong utility (Cunningham, 2013; Cunningham, Fink, & Doherty, 2018; Zeigler, 2007). In addition to identifying the *what* and the *how* of a phenomenon, good theory should also specify *why*, *when*, and *under what conditions* a phenomenon will occur (Cunningham et al., 2018). Theory should not just describe the relationships among variables,

but also elucidate why these relationships exist (Doherty, 2013). Good theorizing should also make strong connections and links to other disciplines and demonstrate the foundations from which it has emerged (Zeigler, 2007). Relatedly, strong theory should be informed by practice and also be able to inform practice, bridging the theory-practice disconnect prevalent in not just sport management and SFD, but in many disciplines (Cunningham et al., 2018; Doherty, 2013; Fink, 2013; Irwin & Ryan, 2013).

For many years, the sport management discipline has engaged in borrowing theories from parent disciplines as its foundation, from which sport-focused theories have emerged (Doherty, 2013). In the SFD space specifically, a recent literature review by Schulenkorf et al. (2016) identified the predominant (external) theoretical influences upon which SFD scholars have been basing their work as positive youth development and social capital. Other theoretical influences include “critical development perspective, ecological systems theory, feminist theory, human capital development, neoliberalism symbolic interactionism, theory of planned behavior, and multilevel analysis” (Schulenkorf et al., 2016, p. 30). The identification of these major theoretical influences in SFD from outside the discipline is not only important per se, but it also provides a launching point for further SFD scholarship and theoretical advancements.

From a sport-focused model perspective, several scholars have worked at conceptualizing and building SFD-specific theory and processes (see Coalter, 2013b; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2012; Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019; Sugden, 2010). Moreover, different research has employed, adapted, or extended these newly established theoretical concepts. To date, however, there has not been a systematic review of SFD-derived theory and empirical work that has expanded existing theoretical approaches. Given the ongoing development of SFD and important conversations about the potentially unique qualities and attributes of sport in

facilitating development agendas (Coalter, 2013a; Schulenkorf, 2017; Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2015) – as well as the broader discourse on the importance of identifying the uniqueness of sport in sport management theory development (Cunningham, 2013; Fink, 2013) – a review such as this is indeed critical and necessary in developing a synthesized and nuanced conceptual understanding of sport and its role in development.

The purpose of this review, therefore, is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical developments that have emerged within the SFD space and identify how this theoretical work has been extended or expanded by scholarship. As such, the review follows the call from several scholars who have illuminated the need for theory building and critical dialogue within SFD in order to help further legitimize and develop the field (Coalter, 2013b; Schulenkorf, 2012; Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2015); moreover, it also responds to a similar call in the wider sport management discipline to engage in more theory development work (Cunningham et al., 2018; Doherty, 2013). The identification and investigation of current SFD-derived theories will assist in moving the theory development dialogue forward, and to further encourage scholars to engage in newly proposed directions for critical theory building. Next, we provide an overview of the approach utilized for this review.

2 Research approach

2.1 Focus and delimitations

In our attempt to provide a focused review and an applied discussion of SFD-derived theories and conceptualizations, we set specific parameters and delimitations as boundaries for this review. First, building on Schulenkorf et al.'s (2016) comprehensive review of SFD literature, we chose to investigate the top 10 journal outlets that this article identified as featuring the highest quantity of SFD-specific research publications. These are *Sport in Society*,

International Review for the Sociology of Sport, *Sport Management Review*, *Journal of Sport Management*, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, *Physical Education and Sport*, *Third World Quarterly*, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *Journal of Sport Management*, and *Sport, Education and Society*. In addition, we reviewed articles published in the *Journal of Sport for Development*. This journal's inaugural issue was only published in 2013, but due to its mission and specific foci, we decided it was important to also include it in our dataset. Overall, the list features an inclusive mix of sport sociology and sport management journals, as well as outlets with a focus on development studies, education, and policymaking.

Second, the decision to focus on the selected outlets highlights our emphasis on peer-reviewed academic journal contributions that are published in English. In turn, this means that all non-English contributions as well as book publications and grey literature—including opinion pieces, editorials, newspaper articles, and any unpublished works—were not included in our sample. Given the fact that a number of scholars have published SFD work in other languages (see, for example, Güldenpfennig, 2011; Jäger, 2011; Petry, Groll, & Tokarski, 2011; Rato Barrio & Ley, 2011), or have made strong contributions in (edited) books (e.g., Coalter, 2007, 2013a; Collison, Darnell, Giulianotti, & Howe, 2019; Darnell, 2012; Gilbert & Bennett, 2012; Hanrahan & Schinke, 2012; Hayhurst, Kay, & Chawansky, 2016; Hoekman & Schulenkorf, 2016; Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Schulenkorf & Adair, 2014; Sherry, Schulenkorf, & Phillips, 2016), we acknowledge the restricted scope of this review as a limitation of our study and a potential opportunity for follow-up research.

2.2 Content analysis

With the groundwork completed, we turned toward the content-based analysis process. In particular, our manual literature-scanning process focused on identifying articles that included

SFD-focused theory or conceptualizations published between 2010 and January 2019. The year 2010 was chosen as a starting point because according to Schulenkorf et al.'s (2016) integrative review, Sugden's 2010 article on the ripple-effect model presented the first SFD-specific theory piece. Hence, we concluded that any articles that mentioned or applied SFD-specific theory or conceptualizations were likely published during or after 2010.

Finally, it should be noted that in contrast to previous meta-reviews that searched for articles based on title, abstract, or keywords (see, for example, Hermens, Super, Verkooijen, & Koelen, 2017; Schulenkorf et al., 2016), our manual review focused on the content of full-length articles. This approach seemed relevant and necessary as we wished to go beyond a descriptive level of analysis; instead, we aimed to identify and subsequently discuss in detail any new SFD-specific theory or conceptualizations, as well as articles that dealt specifically with existing SFD-focused theories or concepts. As such, this included discussions of their development, application, or critique for which a full understanding of the content and arguments was necessary.

From a procedural perspective, Hill first screened all 537 issues of the top 10 above-cited journal outlets, plus the *Journal of Sport for Development*, and identified a total of 20 articles for inclusion in our sample. We then manually reviewed the selected sample and identified five primary theoretical/conceptual approaches that have emerged from within the SFD space and were not brought in from other disciplines in a derivative manner (Chalip, 2006): (a) Sugden's (2010) ripple effect, (b) Lyras and Welty Peachey's (2011) sport-for-development theory (SFDT), (c) Schulenkorf's (2012) sport-for-development framework (S4D), (d) Coalter's (2013b) program theory, and (e) Schulenkorf and Siefken's (2019) sport-for-health model. Once these five theories/conceptualizations were established, our analysis focused on identifying if and

how they were used in other research papers. We interrogated our sample once more and simultaneously broadened our literature search to include additional databases with the goal of determining if any articles that included any of the five SFD-specific theories/conceptual frameworks could be found outside the top 10 journals and the *Journal of Sport for Development*. In this phase, relevant databases (i.e., ProQuest, Scopus) were searched with each of the five theories/frameworks as keywords. This search yielded 10 additional articles that were included in our sample, for a total of 30 (all articles from the review process are included in the reference list and indicated with an asterisk).

Once the search process was completed, we engaged in a discussion around the distinct use and application of SFD-specific theories or conceptualizations. Here, we established the Mention/Engage/Apply (MEA) table (see Table 1) that clearly highlights the different levels of engagement: from merely mentioning SFD theories/concepts (description only) to engaging with them (focus on explanation or interpretation), or applying them as guiding frameworks (critical and sophisticated in-depth discussion). This categorization process also ensured the exclusion of articles that only cited one of the five theoretical/conceptual works without at least referring to the specific theory/framework, or which only used one of the five pieces to merely provide a definition of SFD.

3 Findings

Based on a sport-focused model of theoretical framing (see Chalip, 2006), in this review we set out to provide a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical developments that have emerged within the SFD space. We then also aimed to identify how existent SFD-derived theoretical work has been extended or expanded by scholarship. Our findings are structured according to the five key theoretical and conceptual developments that emerged through our

review of the literature. Each of these are briefly presented and subsequently discussed, taking into account previous engagements by researchers, including their suggestions and expansions, recommendations for theoretical or conceptual developments, and overall critique. Table 1 provides, in a MEA format, a summary of the articles contained in this review and how/to what extent these works have interacted with four of the five theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Given the publication date of January 2019 for Schulenkorf and Siefken's sport-for-health model, this latest (fifth) theoretical contribution did not feature any scholarly work that has interacted with it. Hence, we decided not to list it in the table as a standalone section (it is listed, however, within the SFDT section as engaging with that theory).

Insert Table 1 here

3.1 The ripple-effect model (2010)

Sugden's (2010) ripple-effect model draws on critical left-realism and bottom-up activism to influence positive societal change and contribute to peacebuilding through sport. In presenting the model, Sugden—a pioneer in SFD in both theory and practice—combines his role as a sport sociologist with his decade-long, on-the-ground experiences of orchestrating Football 4 Peace, a sport-for-conflict-resolution project in Northern Israel (for further detail, see Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011; Schulenkorf, Sugden, & Burdsey, 2014; Sugden, 2006, 2008, 2010). The model illustrates that through social and cultural engagement, peace activists on the grassroots level can join forces with key partners from within and outside sport—including influential policy communities and the wider political society—to generate positive and inclusive change in any given context. Importantly, the ripple effect demonstrates that just like a stone that is dropped into a still pool of water, the impact of a specific SFD program is most clearly felt and more easily measured at the center of the intervention. As the ripples move further away from

the center and reach the next level of the project (i.e., the families of participants, their local communities, related stakeholders, and the wider political spheres), they dissipate and reduce in force.

Sugden's (2010) ripple-effect model has been used by a number of scholars to provide sociological background and context, and to justify SFD initiatives or explain respective social outcomes on different societal levels (see, for example, Burnett, 2013, 2014; Malnati et al., 2016). For instance, Burnett (2014) mentioned Sugden's work as a critical element in developing her own conceptual framework for discussions around the uptake dynamics of an SFD program in South African schools. In their article on rethinking SFD through the capability approach, Svensson and Levine (2017) went a step further to specifically engage with the ripple-effect model in a section on theorizing SFD. Here, the authors positioned Sugden's model in the context of other SFD-specific theories and provided an overview of its key foci, messages, and assumptions.

However, our analysis reveals that to date, there is a dearth of conceptual and/or empirical research that has specifically applied, challenged, critiqued, or advanced Sugden's ripple-effect model. One notable exception is Sherry, Schulenkorf, Seal, Nicholson, and Hoye's (2017) study on micro-, meso-, and macro-perspectives of a netball-based SFD project in the South Pacific region that used the model as a framework for an applied discussion. In linking their findings to Sugden's model, the authors discussed "how challenges experienced at the different levels—including that of the participants—can impact, limit, reduce, or undermine the desired benefits of SFD programs" (Sherry et al., 2017, p. 313). As such, Sherry et al.'s study argues for inclusive and strategic SFD programming to achieve desired yet realistic outcomes across multiple levels of society. Importantly, the authors also argued for "a careful selection of

an appropriate research approach as well as a purposeful selection of research participants to understand the processes of change on the different societal levels” (Sherry et al., 2017, p. 305). This consideration then bridges practical and methodological considerations when applying the ripple-effect model in a strategic way.

Finally, it seems important to note that in their specific discussion on conceptual developments in the SFD space, Massey, Whitley, Blom, and Gerstein (2015) only made a side reference to the ripple-effect model. This is interesting insofar as their article presents a well-argued multidisciplinary discussion of systems theory which would align nicely with Sugden’s (2010) model as a basis for further critical debate and interrogation; instead, the authors focused their analysis on the SFD framework (Schulenkorf, 2012) and SFDT (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). This is not a criticism per se, but rather an observation that there is still plenty of room for future research to fully address, apply, and discuss the application of SFD-specific concepts.

3.2 Sport-for-development theory (2011)

SFDT emerged from a grounded theory effort with the Doves Olympic Movement Project in Cyprus (Lyras, 2007), but was not published in an academic journal until 2011, when Lyras and Welty Peachey illustrated its application with two diverse SFD projects—the Doves Olympic Movement and the World Scholar-Athlete Games. SFDT, premised on the concept of Olympism, draws from interdisciplinary theoretical and conceptual foundations including organizational theory, intergroup contact theory, humanistic psychology, educational psychology, and theory and methods of research (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, 2018). At its core, SFDT advances that “sport initiatives can facilitate personal development and social change by embracing non-traditional sport management practices through an interdisciplinary framework, blending sport with cultural enrichment” (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011, p. 313). As

such, SFDT has five key components: (a) impacts assessment, (b) organizational, (c) sport and physical activity, (d) educational, and (e) cultural enrichment. These components, or building blocks of SFD programs, can then be adapted and augmented based on the cultural context and populations targeted by the SFD intervention (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2018).

As its first component, SFDT advances that impacts assessments should measure multilevel change over long periods of time in order to truly capture the impacts of SFD initiatives (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). The organizational component suggests that both top-down and bottom-up culturally sensitive management strategies are needed, ones that involve and give voice to all stakeholders in SFD interventions, including participants, volunteers, donors, and community members. Sport and physical activity play a critical role in SFD programs, and this third component advances that non-traditional sport programming and inclusive play can be important, that the level of competition should be matched to the nature of the population being served, and that quality educational lessons should undergird the sport and play activities. Educational activities comprise the fourth component, positing that educational programming (speakers, workshops, etc.) should complement the sport and physical activities in order to facilitate transferability of learning outcomes to the real world once the intervention concludes. Finally, the fifth component, cultural enrichment, suggests that cultural activities such as music, dance, and the arts should be included with sport and educational programming. Taken together, these components can provide a holistic, theoretically grounded programmatic and design strategy for SFD interventions (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2018).

Since its introduction in the 2011 *Sport Management Review* article, the most common way scholars have engaged with SFDT has been to simply use the theory to provide background on the SFD space (i.e., mention it briefly), rather than as a guiding theoretical framework or to

offer extensions of the theory (see Table 1 for a complete review). However, SFDT has been applied by several scholars to guide their empirical investigations. The first application was by Welty Peachey, Lyras, Borland, and Cohen (2013), who used SFDT to frame an investigation into the outcomes of the Street Soccer USA (SSUSA) program. SSUSA is a non-profit organization based in the United States with a mission to use soccer to assist individuals suffering from homelessness make positive changes in their lives. Here, it was found that many participants, but not all, in the annual SSUSA Cup benefitted from the event by building a sense of community, renewing hope, cultivating an outward focus, fostering goal achievement, and by experiencing personal development (Welty Peachey et al., 2013). In support of SFDT, this study found that it was the blend of inclusive sport programming with educational and cultural activities that evinced positive outcomes for some participants. While this work applied SFDT in a new context, that of SFD special events, it did not critically engage with or extend the theory beyond indicating that it was the inclusive programming which contributed to participant outcomes.

Around the same time, Hancock, Lyras, and Ha (2013) used SFDT as a framework for conducting a global content analysis of the trends in 376 SFD programs for girls and women aimed at promoting health, gender equity, and social integration. SFDT was used as an organizational framework to categorize and evaluate these SFD programs to reveal patterns in sports and activities, program objectives, and intended program outcomes, concluding that progress toward global gender equity has been made due to the number of policies supporting sport and women's development. While important as an application of SFDT, this work did not extend or expand the theory in any significant way. Another application of SFDT was offered by Marshall and Barry (2015), who utilized the theory as a lens to examine the Kicking Aids Out

Network in Southern Africa. Their intent was to test SFDT's applicability in a different geographical context. The findings revealed that SFDT was an appropriate lens in this context to facilitate program design, delivery, and the integration of sport with education and life skills development. Again, this work's main contribution was to utilize/test SFDT in a new context; it did not build upon or extend the theory from a theory development standpoint.

A study that did build upon SFDT was published by Welty Peachey, Cunningham, Lyras, Cohen, and Bruening (2015). Their events-focused research utilized SFDT as a framework to help understand the impact of the World Scholar-Athlete Games on prejudice reduction and change agent self-efficacy. This work specified that it was the team-based sport environment which best facilitated prejudice reduction, while the educational programming was most effective at evincing change agent-self-efficacy in event youth participants. Importantly, this work was one of the first to specifically link program components to targeted outcomes, thus providing an extension to the more general SFDT, which does not provide these linkages.

Next, Bruening et al. (2015) extended the application of SFDT into the service-learning environment of a sport management program based at a U.S. institution. Their intent was to gain a better understanding of the design, structure, and management of an SFD service-learning project situated in the inner city environment that could enable social capital development among the program's college student leaders. Utilizing SFDT as the framework, this study demonstrated that it was the intentional and strategic design of the program, coupled with a combination of sport, educational, and cultural activities, that enabled long-term social capital development. Similarly, Cohen and Ballouli (2016) applied the theory as a lens for an empirical investigation of an SFD intervention that combined music (hip hop), sport, and physical activity to target at-risk youth in Harlem in New York City. The authors concluded that SFDT provided a salient

framework to evaluate the components and outcomes of the program, but did not provide any theoretical extensions or examine specific intervention components that facilitated targeted outcomes.

The most recent application of SFDT was conducted by LeCrom, Martin, Dwyer, and Greenhalgh (2019) in their study of stakeholder perceptions of the management and health-related outcomes of two SFD interventions, one organized in a sport-plus format (i.e., sport as the central context for changing values, attitudes, and behaviors) and the other as plus-sport (i.e., sport as a hook). SFDT was employed to assess the programs and management of these programs through the organizational, sport/physical activity, and educational components of the theory. This work extended SFDT in two important ways: (a) by exploring two types of SFD programs simultaneously; and (b) by demonstrating that the components of SFDT do not operate in isolation but rather influence each other, such as the organizational component influencing the lenses used to design the sport and educational components.

One article that both challenged and extended SFDT was Massey et al.'s (2015) work, which posited that systems thinking could be integrated with SFDT to enhance an understanding of the change process. Specifically, Massey et al. argued that SFDT promotes linear thinking, in that micro-level change leads to meso-level change, which subsequently engenders macro-level change. However, change does not always come about in this linear fashion. By taking a more dynamic, systems-thinking approach, change can be viewed as more fluid and interconnected, which would enhance SFDT's articulation of the change process. In addition, Hills, Velasquez, and Walker (2018) critiqued SFDT by proposing that the theory does not truly articulate how sport can be used for social change and development, but rather, it formulates a set of conditions that sport or any intervention targeted at social change can employ. According to Hills et al.

(2018), “It is suggested that rather than representing a SFD theory, these are simply generic principles for vehicles of change in social interventions whether that vehicle be sport, art, cooking, or embroidery” (p. 26). We concur that labeling SFDT as a set of conditions has merit; however, we also suggest that one essential component of SFDT is indeed sport. We will return to this critical aspect in the Discussion section.

Hills et al.’s (2018) critical comment around the specific use and design of sport leads to a similar aspect of SFD that has perhaps been taken for granted in SFDT. This aspect relates to health and physical activity as specific areas of development that sport can indeed address much more specifically than other types of development activities. Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019) addressed this argument in their development of an important sport-for-health model (SFHM; see Section 3.5 for further detail). Building on SFDT, the authors articulated how the SFHM complements existing SFD conceptualizations by specifically addressing health and physical activity as core components, an aspect that is not present as a core in SFDT.

In summary, the scholarly work that has thus far engaged with SFDT has done so mainly to provide background about the development and challenges within the SFD space. To date, there have been few extensions or expansions of SFDT (see the above works for exceptions), other than continued calls to utilize and test the theory in different cultural contexts, which in and of itself only offers a minimal contribution (see Table 1 for an overview of these works). However, as reviewed above, there have been a few notable exceptions—that is, studies that have applied the theory as a framework to guide empirical investigations, with several authors offering a critique of SFDT (see Hills et al., 2018; LeCrom et al., 2019; Massey et al., 2015). Similarly, from an empirical perspective, other than Welty Peachey and colleagues’ work with SSUSA (Welty Peachey et al., 2013) and with the World Scholar-Athlete Games (Welty Peachey

et al., 2015), scholarship has not yet focused on linking specific sport, cultural, and educational outcomes—or a combination thereof—to specific and targeted outcomes, as called for by Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011, 2018). Moreover, there has not yet been scholarship which has employed SFDT from the outset in the design and implementation of an SFD program and subsequently evaluated respective outcomes and the impact of the intervention. Thus, there is considerable opportunity for scholars to engage with and extend SFDT in new and exciting ways.

3.3 Sport-for-development framework (2012)

Schulenkorf's (2012) S4D framework presents a conceptual, process-oriented management tool that was designed to inform sport and event planning, management, and leverage. Taking a strategic focus on development, it was conceived to guide the investigation of SFD projects and their contribution to understanding and assessing direct social impacts and sustainable social outcomes for communities. As a flexible framework, it also set out to take account of cultural heterogeneity and program diversity, while shaping implementation, directing evaluation, and encouraging future planning of development initiatives. As such, one of the key benefits of the S4D framework is its ability to integrate the social processes generated through participatory sport activities. As a guiding framework, it therefore allows for the tailored application of individual projects as managerial case studies.

Although Schulenkorf's (2012) article has frequently been mentioned and cited in SFD-specific studies and literature reviews, specific engagement with the S4D framework remains limited. In fact, the framework has only been employed in three studies (Reis, Vieira, & Sousa-Mast, 2016; Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019; Svensson & Levine, 2017). First, Reis et al.'s (2016) analysis of the Vilas Olímpicas do Rio de Janeiro highlighted the program's specific focus on

community involvement during all stages of SFD programming and delivery; as such, it tapped into the framework's process-oriented nature in order to explain potential empowerment outcomes in the context of a community development project in Brazil. Second, Svensson and Levine (2017) in their article on rethinking SFD through Sen's (1999) capability approach, utilized the S4D framework as a background for their assessment of how the capability approach—a normative framework rooted in human development theory—could further enhance our conceptual understanding of SFD. In particular, they pointed to the S4D framework's strategic and inclusive planning focus, which aims to facilitate and leverage locally owned, sustainable development outcomes. This information was then coupled with the newly added contributions of the capability approach, with its focus on participant-centered engagement. In short, Svensson and Levine (2017) built on the S4D framework by highlighting the importance of adopting a participant-centered approach to promote better inclusion of local stakeholders in SFD program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Third, in proposing and positioning their SFHM, Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019) referred to the S4D framework as well as SFDT (see Section 3.2) as central components of SFD theorizing. As such, the authors suggested that for many SFD programs, both these components have “indeed been (knowingly or unknowingly) critical as a theoretical backdrop to design and management” (p. 98). The newly proposed SFHM, however, differs from previous conceptual and theoretical models through its distinct and explicit emphasis on healthy lifestyle development, including regular physical activity and a healthy diet. When highlighting this specific focus, Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019) engaged with existing theories to better differentiate and situate the SFHM in the conceptual playing field (see Section 3.5 for more details).

Finally, the only research article that applied the S4D framework in more depth was Massey et al.'s (2015) study on the use of systems theory in SFD. This article discussed the S4D framework (and also SFDT) to critically examine the principles of systems theory and their complementary as well as opposing viewpoints. In doing so, Massey and colleagues provided a critical appraisal of the process-driven S4D framework and showed the benefits of considering alternative approaches, including a non-linear and arguably more holistic systems approach to community development. The authors highlighted challenges with the framework as well as opportunities, and they discussed integrating and applying their advanced model in the wider SFD field.

3.4 Programme theory (2013)

Coalter's (2013b) programme theory was developed out of an assessment of four sport-based interventions conducted by Comic Relief in the United Kingdom targeting gang membership, racism, at-risk youth, and conflict resolution. Drawing from various theories about how intervention programs might function and evince outcomes, programme theory posits that it is in fact the social relationships between program leaders and participants that are most central to any change in values, attitudes, and behaviors through the development of respect, trust, and reciprocity. This approach captures many elements and variables to enable effective SFD interventions, such as recruitment, participants, organization (sport-plus/plus-sport), social relationships, social climate, personal impacts, interim outcomes (short-term), and strategic outcomes (long-term). Coalter's (2013b) intent was to render a framework that enables SFD practitioners to think strategically about how they "recruit, design, and deliver their programmes and seek to define and achieve their outcomes" (p. 610).

Coalter (2013b) concluded that change is most likely to occur through social relationships, and these relationships are equally—if not more important than—the role of sport in the development process. In addition, how sport is designed is critically important. As such, programme theory suggests that a sport-plus model (Coalter, 2007)—where sport is considered as a central context for changing values, attitudes, and behaviors and is strategically designed and managed to achieve outcomes—may be more effective in bringing about change than plus-sport models, where sport is viewed more as a hook to attract participants with not as much intentional design or thought behind them.

To date, there has been a paucity of empirical work specifically applying programme theory as an undergirding framework. Moreover, scholars have not yet made any theoretical extensions or expansions of this theory. The majority of scholarly work employing programme theory has utilized it primarily to help shape the context and background of SFD practice, or to highlight challenges with the evaluation of SFD programs. For instance, Adams, Harris, and Lindsey (2018) used programme theory to help provide background on how an SFD program can facilitate social capital development in participants, but the theory was not employed as a framework to guide the analysis (see Table 1 for a full list of articles that have used programme theory as a foundation to build study backgrounds).

The only article that utilized programme theory to a greater extent was Hills et al.'s (2018) recent work. While mainly using programme theory as a foundation to highlight the lack of empirical work investigating mechanisms rather than conditions in SFD, it reinforced programme theory by advancing that sport could be utilized as much more than a hook to attract participants. Hills and colleagues explicated that “Sport as an analogy provides a flexible tool whereby sport can be intentionally designed to deliver a potentially unlimited number of

messages and principles that, in turn, can contribute to potentially limitless number of social outcomes” (p. 34). While Hills and colleagues did engage with the theory and used it in their argumentation, they did not extend or adapt programme theory in any fashion.

Overall, and perhaps due to its more recent publication, scholars have not yet engaged fully with programme theory as a framework. As such, ample opportunity exists to apply, develop, extend, or challenge it in myriad SFD contexts.

3.5. Sport-for-Health Model (2019)

The most recent conceptual contribution in the SFD space, the SFHM, focuses on managing healthy lifestyle projects in an increasingly unhealthy society (Schulenkorf & Siefken, 2019). Based on their lived experiences in the Pacific Islands region, Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019) provided a flexible conceptual tool aimed at establishing the nexus between sport management, health promotion, sociocultural development, policy, and sustainability. With a particular focus on health promotion—including regular physical activity and healthy diet—the intention of this inclusive model was to strategically underpin or guide future SFD initiatives that focus on health-related development in disadvantaged settings. While the specific health focus distinguishes this model from the other four SFD-specific contributions in this review, the authors highlighted that the model is intended to complement rather than challenge existing SFD theories and frameworks. In fact, when discussing SFHM and its role in SFD management, Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019) specifically referred to SFDT and the S4D framework as important contributors to the model’s design and development.

Given its recent publication in January 2019, the SFHM has not yet been mentioned or utilized by other researchers. However, it will be intriguing to see if future SFD-specific theories, models, or frameworks continue to build on existing scholarship in the way the SFHM has done,

or if new contributions will take a grander, more disruptive path by suggesting non-traditional approaches to conceptual thinking in the SFD space.

4 Discussion

To begin our discussion, we provide a comparison of the five theoretical/conceptual works identified in this review, highlighting key messages and themes, as well as the commonalities and differences among them. Then, we discuss the gaps identified in the review and offer our insights on what good theorizing in the SFD space can look like, coupled with several new conceptual ideas drawn from this review to move the needle forward in SFD theorizing. We then posit directions for future research and acknowledge the limitations of our study.

4.1. Comparison across themes and messages

Despite the broad, multi-disciplinary nature of SFD, it is interesting to note that the five theories/frameworks uncovered in this review all trend towards being more managerial and instrumental in nature. As applied socio-managerial contributions, they specifically speak to the ‘how’ of doing SFD research and as such, they communicate a number of key themes and messages. The first key theme cutting across the five theories/frameworks was that all of them emphasized the importance of relationship-building in the SFD space. In fact, relationship-building emerged as almost more important than the sport itself in enhancing the efficacy of SFD programs in achieving targeted outcomes (Coalter, 2013b). Strong relationships between program participants and program leaders and volunteers are essential, as well as bottom-up involvement from community members and intervention participants in the program design and planning (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). While this is not necessarily a surprising finding, as much as been written in the SFD space regarding the value of relationship-building (see

Schulenkorf et al., 2016, for a review), it is important to note that scholars view the relational aspects of SFD as critical building blocks for any SFD-derived theory or conceptual framework.

A second cross-cutting theme was that all of the theories/frameworks cited the critical need to package sport with other non-sport program activities in SFD interventions, such as educational workshops, cultural activities, and ancillary special events (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2012). Sport alone will not necessarily facilitate development outcomes, and as such, strategically reinforcing sport programming with non-sport activities appears to be essential from a theoretical perspective. Third, and relatedly, all five works stressed the critical need to link SFD agendas and programming with broader development policies and agendas in order to facilitate long-term outcomes and impact (Coalter, 2013a; Levermore, 2008; Sugden, 2010). Theoretically, standalone SFD programs that are not strategically designed and interwoven with broader community, national, and/or international policy agendas will struggle to attain sustained outcomes and impact.

A fourth key message is that all five theories/frameworks addressed the challenges and difficulties of theorizing in the SFD space, wrestling with the fact that it may be impossible to ultimately build an SFD-derived theory that captures myriad cultural contexts. Much has already been written on the challenge of building theory in SFD due to the high degree of variance in cultural contexts, community needs, and the outcomes targeted (Darnell et al., 2019; Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2015; Welty Peachey et al., 2015), but it is important to note that the theoretical/conceptual works in this review all acknowledge the same limitation.

Finally, and related to the previous argument, our review revealed that none of the five theories/frameworks specifically linked sport to targeted outcomes. By this we mean that the SFD-derived theories did not specifically address how or why a specified sport(s) would achieve

a targeted outcome such as social inclusion or enhanced cultural understanding. Why, for instance, is soccer specifically a potentially efficacious sport to facilitate social inclusion? How does the match of sport and outcome vary by cultural context? And, finally, what types of mainstream and non-traditional sports potentially link to which outcomes, or to what degree do sport, educational, and cultural activities work in tandem to facilitate outcomes and lasting impact? Lyras and Welty Peachey (2011) perhaps came the closest to theoretically linking the type of sport and outcomes, positing that non-traditional sport and physical activities not familiar to participants could best facilitate development outcomes by creating a space where all participants would be potentially of equal ability. However, most of the SFD-derived theories remain rather vague on how or why a particular type of sport produces specific outcomes. We offer our thoughts and insights on these intriguing questions in the following section.

4.2. Insights, gaps, and ways forward

Our review highlights a number of key insights as well as salient broader issues in SFD theory building motivated by the five SFD-derived theories/frameworks and the limited conceptual or empirical work applying these theories (see Table 1). In line with Schulenkorf et al.'s (2016) review of SFD articles, we found that most SFD scholarship is still borrowing theories from other disciplines, such as positive youth development, social capital, ecological systems theory, and feminist theory, among others, instead of engaging with and applying the SFD-derived frameworks. While the engagement with theories from parent disciplines presents an important aspect of theorizing (see Zeigler, 2007), the current over-reliance on theoretical work from outside sport management – and SFD specifically – is disconcerting, in that good, foundational theorizing from within is critically needed in the sport management area to enhance its scholarly and practical relevance (see also Cunningham, 2013; Fink 2013). Indeed, the present

study reinforces recent systematic literature reviews of the SFD field conducted by Darnell and colleagues (2019), in which they call for a renewed emphasis on theory and context within SFD.

So where are we now and where are areas for improvement? From a positive standpoint, all five theories/frameworks provide keen insights into the *what*, *when*, and *how* of SFD programs, a critical mark of good theorizing (Cunningham et al., 2018; Fink, 2013). Following Zeigler's (2007) challenge, all of these theories/frameworks embrace at their core a focus on social concern to undergird their conceptual offerings. In fact, we suggest that this focus on social concern is the greatest strength of SFD theorizing to date, perhaps even more so than the theorizing that has occurred in other areas of the sport management discipline. Zeigler noted that sport management theories should encompass people of all ages, ability levels, or status levels, and that as a discipline, we need to think about "what evidence do we have that sport as a social institution is really making a positive contribution to society?" (p. 297). In this sense, we submit that SFD theorizing is at the forefront of sport management theoretical work in showing social concern for people of all ages, abilities, and status levels, and that SFD theorizing is directly addressing Zeigler's challenge to ascertain how sport management is truly making a difference in society. In line with this, SFD theorizing has also directly tackled the idea that organized sport tends to do more harm than good – another critical concern raised by Zeigler (2007).

Finally, we suggest that a strength of the five SFD theories/frameworks is their strong connections to practice (Cunningham et al., 2018; Doherty, 2013; Fink, 2013; Irwin & Ryan, 2013). All of these SFD theories/frameworks were informed by practice or took a grounded theory approach. Where the challenge remains, however, is in bridging the theory-practice divide. In other words, although these five works grew from practice, their collective ability to influence SFD practice appears to be limited to date. While this lamentable status quo calls for a

more engaged collaboration between SFD academics and practitioners – and more concerted efforts in establishing meaningful opportunities for engagement specifically – it should be noted that the situation in SFD is not an exception to the rule, with knowledge translation issues common in academia more broadly (Schaillee, Spaaij, Jeans, & Theeboom, 2018).

Against this background, we now turn towards specific areas of improvement or refinement and current research gaps. Collectively, the five SFD theories/frameworks struggled in some aspects of good theory building, leaving room for growth going forward as scholars test, extend, and refine these theories, and as they engage in theory development exercises themselves. While all five theories/frameworks provide explanations of a phenomenon (Cunningham et al., 2018), they do so in a broad and general manner that makes it challenging to specifically test relationships among the variables encompassed in each theory. In fact, none of the theories/frameworks put forth testable propositions, an important hallmark of good theory (Cunningham, 2013; Cunningham et al., 2018; Zeigler, 2007). Perhaps this is one reason why scholars have not engaged to any a great extent in theory testing, extensions, and refinement in the SFD field. While we acknowledge the context-specific nature of different SFD initiatives, we suggest that scholars engaged in future SFD theorizing develop more concrete, specific, and testable propositions to enable more rigorous conceptualizations and empirical advancements.

Also, sport management theorists have previously suggested that the uniqueness of sport must feature in our theorizing (Cunningham, 2013; Doherty, 2013; Fink, 2013). As such, we must address *why* and *under what conditions* phenomena occur, in addition to the *what*, *when*, and *how*. Relatedly, there has been a long-standing commentary that scholars must examine why, and under what conditions, sport may contribute to social and development aims (Coakley, 2015; Coalter, 2010). Here, again, SFD theorizing has fallen short of the mark. The five SFD

theories/frameworks do not address the *why* question or thoroughly explain the uniqueness of sport as a development tool over and above other development initiatives (e.g., music, arts, health). This is a missed opportunity in the SFD field, and going forward, the *why* question must be answered to legitimize the field and advance theory, empirical work, and practice. Relatedly, the five theories/frameworks also do not explore *under what conditions* SFD initiatives will be most or least effective in achieving targeted outcomes. In essence, boundary conditions are not established; there appears to be an inherent assumption that SFD programs will be equally effective for everyone under all conditions (for a critical commentary on this issue, see Coalter, 2010 and Coakley, 2015). Thus, we challenge scholars engaged in SFD theory development to fundamentally tackle the difficult *why sport* question, and to establish and refine boundary conditions for the effectiveness of SFD programs. These are challenging tasks, but much needed to develop strong theory in the SFD landscape.

4.2.1 Ways forward

We next offer our thoughts on a number of additional content areas that we believe extend the five SFD theories/frameworks and will enhance SFD theorizing in the future. In particular, we focus our discussion on three key aspects, namely the link between types of sport and targeted outcomes; the ‘dosage of sport’ in SFD programming; and the integration of leadership into SFD theorizing.

Earlier in this review, we raised the question regarding the types of sport that may facilitate targeted outcomes. The five theories/frameworks have not engaged with this and related compelling questions. Here, we suggest a bespoke approach towards achieving specific outcomes; for instance, we posit that non-traditional, cooperative sports and activities may be best suited to address outcomes related specifically to facilitating cross-cultural understanding

and peace building. These alternative and cooperative activities necessitate an equal and level playing field where all participants begin at the same level (i.e., negating the potential advantage of skilled players in a traditional sport). This could be efficacious with groups historically in conflict as the type of activity would not privilege any one group over the other, and allow for cooperation rather than intense competition, which can break down stereotypes and build trust (see Lyras & Welty Peachey 2011, for a discussion). Alternatively, when targeting social inclusion, social mobility, or social capital with SFD interventions, more mainstream sports that are interwoven into cultural fabrics and norms could be most effective, as they will help develop linkages and networks for participants to engage in broader society and thus experience inclusion, mobility, and enhanced social capital. Apart from the obvious arguments around global appeal and cost-effectiveness, this is likely the reason we see so many SFD interventions employing the mainstream and popular sport of football as a development mechanism. In addition, we advance that indigenous sport offerings can play a critical role in achieving social cohesion, engagement, and collaboration. This is particularly relevant for SFD programs based in high income countries but working in low- and middle income settings, as indigenous sports allow for local relevance and a more authentic approach towards reciprocal learning, thereby reducing potential neo-colonial tendencies. For instance, if Kirikiti rather than Cricket serves as a foundation for SFD programming in South Pacific nations such as Samoa, local traditions and style are guaranteed to be front and center of co-designed SFD initiatives (see Khoo, Schulenkorf, & Adair, 2014).

Another intriguing question which emerged from this review, and where the five theories/frameworks are relatively weak, is how and to what extent sport should be packaged with other development mechanisms (education, arts, culture) to facilitate outcomes. To extend

SFD theorizing to date, we advance that the ‘dosage of sport’ should be stronger than non-sport activities when participants first engage in an SFD program, but then over time, non-sport programming should rise more to the fore to where the time allotted to sport and non-sport activities is relatively equal. We hold that this will be important whether the program is sport-plus or plus-sport. Participants are drawn to SFD programs for the sport component – this is what often excites and motivates them. Thus, if there is too much non-sport programming at the beginning of an intervention, this may run the risk of turning participants away from the program and lead to attrition or diminished impact, an often-cited issue within SFD programs (see Cohen, Taylor, & Hanrahan, 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2013). As participants become more comfortable in the program, learn to know staff and other participants, gradually they may be more amenable to taking part in more education-based activities and other non-sport offerings designed to help achieve a targeted outcome. We feel that the dosage of sport has an important role to play both practically and theoretically, and we are confident that other scholars can advance our conceptual thinking and help build stronger theory related to the relationship between sport activities, non-sport activities, and development agendas and outcomes.

Finally, to extend the five SFD theories/frameworks even further, we advance that SFD theorizing must address issues of leadership and leadership development. Leadership is noticeably absent as an input, process, and outcome factor in SFD theorizing to date. Recent scholarship in SFD has begun to engage with questions of leadership (see, for example, Frawley, Misener, Lock, & Schulenkorf, 2019; Jones, Wegner, Bunds, Edwards, & Bocarro, 2018; Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017), but theorizing has not kept pace, and this is a notable gap and missed opportunity. Following preliminary conceptual work by Welty Peachey and Burton (2017), we posit that servant leadership, a style of leadership focused on serving others and putting

followers first, is a necessary input, process, and outcome factor that should be captured in our SFD theories/frameworks. Servant leadership would be advantageous in the initial stages of program design and implementation, for its centering on care for and involvement of others will be helpful in navigating local communities and contexts and countering neo-colonial tendencies in SFD (Coalter, 2007). Also, focusing on servant leadership as a program output could help develop servant leadership behaviors in program participants, which may enable them to give back to SFD programs in volunteer or staff roles in the future and to further engage in helping behaviors with local communities. However, once mission and goal alignment have been achieved, and support garnered in the local community, gradually transitioning to a shared leadership model will likely be advantageous, where leadership responsibilities and development become the purview of local stakeholders (see Jones et al., 2018, for a full discussion of shared leadership in SFD).

So how can aspects of leadership be integrated into current conceptual thinking, or how can it advance existing theories? SFDT (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011) posits that bottom-up and top-down organizational structures are needed to efficiently and effectively achieve targeted outcomes. Here, servant leadership can be added to SFDT as an initial input into the design and implementation of SFD programs as the servant leader gives guidance and direction to the initiative (a form of top-down organizing). Gradually, though, a servant leader will want to engage local stakeholders to foster shared leadership (bottom-up organizing), which may ultimately lead to program sustainability. Similarly, in the S4D framework (Schulenkorf, 2012), the relationship between the change agent and local communities may evolve over time, progressing from a servant leadership approach to shared leadership. In short, while at the beginning of many SFD programs active involvement and guidance by change agents may be

required, the leadership style may transition to a shared model and – as local leaders are empowered – result in increased local responsibility and minimal external support. Such developments may also allow for more indigenous forms of leadership to emerge and be given prominence as we cannot and should not assume that Western leadership models will be suitable across all contexts. Future research is certainly needed to test and refine these conceptual ideas, and to further theorize about leadership modalities in different SFD contexts.

4.3 (De-)limitations of this review

In this article, we have provided a focused review and an applied discussion of SFD-derived theories and conceptualizations. As such, we set specific parameters as boundaries for our review. In particular, we employed what Chalip (2006) described as a sport-focused model approach, where—in contrast to a derivative model—the focus is placed on the theories and conceptualizations of the sport discipline itself. We believe that this focus has contributed to strengthening this paper and its specific purpose of providing a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical developments that have emerged within the SFD space; however, we openly acknowledge this focus as a specific delimitation of our work that could potentially be addressed in derivative-based follow-up studies.

In line with this, we also acknowledge the research limitations of our study. From a setup perspective, our review may have missed studies that were published outside the 11 target journals we scanned for the initial identification of SFD-specific theories, even though we also conducted a keyword database search of outlets outside of the target journals. As discussed earlier, we may have missed important contributions across other publication types, especially books, chapters, research reports, or theses. Next, from a process perspective, we have aimed to identify, appraise, and synthesize all of the empirical evidence that met our pre-specified

eligibility criteria in the context of our study purpose. As such, we made every attempt to follow Siddaway, Wood, and Hedges's (2019) recommendation to use a systematic approach to identify, select, and critically analyze the research in order to make the review "methodical, comprehensive, transparent, and replicable" (p. 751). We acknowledge, however, that the manual review process employed in this study remains imperfect and a comprehensive machine-based text analysis (e.g., Leximancer-facilitated study) might have further minimized selection bias and produced more complete findings.

5 Conclusion

Through this review of SFD-derived theoretical and conceptual work, we have demonstrated that some limited progress has been made in theorizing and conceptualizing the design and implementation of SFD programs and interventions. It is encouraging that within the past nine years, five theoretical and conceptual frameworks have emerged from within the SFD space, and that a number of scholars have started to engage with these frameworks in more depth. However, our review also identified several areas of concern, most notably that limited scholarship has truly applied, extended, or challenged these frameworks.

Does all of this suggest that theorizing within SFD is an exercise in futility? Is the landscape of SFD too broad, or too contextualized, to warrant grand or meta theories? And, within this context, what role does sport really play within the development world; is it only another arm of development and therefore replaceable by alternative activities, or does it indeed have unique or distinctive characteristics that can make a positive difference in development efforts? Questions such as these remain to be addressed in future research, particularly from a sport-focused theory perspective—which Chalip (2006) highlighted as "critical in helping to legitimize a field" (p. 3), in this case SFD. As such, scholars from within and outside the SFD

space are challenged to step up and engage in an attempt to paint a larger, clearer, and more diverse picture. In fact, this does not only relate to the area of theorizing per se, but also to the engagement with local, indigenous scholars whose voices remain worryingly silent in the current debate.

In our review we have identified aspects of SFD theorizing that are underwhelming and at times disheartening; however, we also suggest—and are excited about—the opportunities and possibilities for future work that engages with SFD-related theorizing. We have suggested three specific content areas that we believe can extend the five SFD theories/frameworks and will enhance SFD theorizing in the future. These are the link between types of sport and targeted outcomes; the ‘dosage of sport’ in SFD programming; and the integration of leadership into SFD theorizing. There are, of course, plenty of other opportunities to advance our theoretical understanding of the SFD space, and to move the discussion forward. Overall, we should view the SFD landscape as one rich in context that requires diligent and novel approaches to theory development—approaches informed by practice and that do not privilege scholars or scholarship only from high income countries. In many ways, SFD practice has outpaced our theorizing, and while this has potentially resulted in at times poorly designed and ill-conceived programs (Coalter, 2013b), it also presents important and exciting opportunities to step up and bridge the theory-practice divide within SFD. We hope this review can be a stimulus to motivate and accomplish future SFD-derived theory building and engagement efforts.

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