

Moving Beyond Disciplinary Silos:

The Potential for Transdisciplinary Research in Sport for Development

Abstract

The Sport for Development (SfD) field is transdisciplinary by nature, and yet scholars tend to stay within their disciplinary perspectives in their study of SfD. There is a need for more collaborative and collective approaches in SfD research. Transdisciplinary research facilitates conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological innovations that transcend disciplinary boundaries, creating new knowledge that can advance a field. The purpose of this paper is to critically review the disciplinary trends in SfD research within (respectively) sport sociology, social anthropology, sport management, public health, leisure, sport pedagogy, and sport psychology, with a particular focus on where there may be intersection, duplication, obfuscation, and omission between these disciplines. Disciplinary intersections are then considered, along with gaps in the SfD evidence base that are ripe for transdisciplinary research. The paper concludes with an exploration of possibilities for future transdisciplinary research in SfD.

Keywords: sport for development and peace; collaboration; interdisciplinary; multidisciplinary; innovation

Disciplines are social constructs that have conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological tendencies, while *fields* are cross-disciplinary areas of inquiry and practice that require multiple perspectives to understand and address complex social problems (Stokols et al., 2013). Sport for Development (SfD) is a cross-disciplinary field, with SfD programs seeking to address complex and multifaceted social problems (e.g., conflict, homelessness, poverty, mental health) that require diverse perspectives, collaborations, and partnerships (Massey et al., 2015; Svensson & Loat, 2019). As the SfD field has grown, so has the scholarship exploring many facets of the field (Schulenkorf et al., 2016); this has included valuable cross-disciplinary areas of inquiry, though most SfD research tends to stay within disciplinary boundaries (Haudenhuyse et al., 2020; Massey & Whitley, 2019). While research within a single discipline can be quite valuable for answering discipline-specific questions, these approaches “may not provide the necessary tools to fully understand and address complex scientific and societal problems” (Stokols et al., 2013, p. 5). This is the value of cross-disciplinary research, which integrates conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological approaches to enhance understanding and identify solutions (Haudenhuyse et al., 2020; Massey & Whitley, 2019).

For a practical example of how cross-disciplinary research can benefit the SfD field, consider the political orientation of SfD programs. Scholars like Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) have drawn a distinction between the dominant and transformative approaches represented in the SfD paradigm. In the former, the goal is most often to use sport to teach young people the skills they need to survive amongst and within structures of inequity (broadly defined). By contrast, the latter approach is primarily focused on social transformation, a process that requires (at the least) a commitment to critical pedagogy and to the co-transformation of both organizers and participants in SfD. What this distinction suggests is that SfD research is needed that accounts

not just for whether Sfd works (or not), but also research that examines the *kind* of change that Sfd programs imagine and pursue. The benefits of this to Sfd practice would be a clearer and more refined understanding of social change, and Sfd activity that is more connected to a program theory or theory of change, and therefore more rigorous and replicable. It would also encourage Sfd practice that is connected to and implemented with participants, rather than simply delivered to them. This, we suggest, further illustrates the importance of cross-disciplinary research that is integrative and broad-gauged.

There are several ways for Sfd scholars to move beyond disciplinary perspectives to embrace more collaborative and collective approaches: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity. If we use the fruit metaphor from Nissani (1995) to elucidate these terms, research within one disciplinary perspective is fruit (e.g., apple, banana, mango) served on its own. A multidisciplinary approach (i.e., multiple perspectives within a team) is a fruit salad, while an interdisciplinary approach (i.e., synthesis of perspectives from different disciplines) is a fruit smoothie. Extending this metaphor to a transdisciplinary approach (i.e., unity of perspectives beyond disciplines), Austin and colleagues (2008) described the smoothie as the foundation for a new dessert. Transdisciplinary research facilitates conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological innovations that transcend disciplinary boundaries, creating new knowledge and innovative solutions that can advance a field (e.g., the Sfd field) (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). While the degree of integration increases as researchers shift from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinarity to transdisciplinarity, the boundaries between these categories are blurry (Adler & Stewart, 2010; Stokols et al., 2013). The hallmark for multidisciplinary research tends to be researchers from different disciplines studying the same problem from their own perspectives, yet combining their ideas, methods, and/or findings at

some point in the research process. Interdisciplinary research teams work more closely, integrating conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological approaches from multiple disciplines as they study the same problem. Transdisciplinary research takes this a step further, creating “novel conceptual and methodological approaches that synthesize and extend discipline-specific perspectives, theories, methods, and translational strategies to yield innovative solutions” (Stokols et al., 2013, p. 6). Thus, transdisciplinary research teams *transcend* disciplinary boundaries, extend knowledge in a particular field, and identify practical solutions to the problems under study.

The purpose of this paper is to critically review the disciplinary trends in Sfd research within (respectively) sport sociology, social anthropology, sport management, public health, leisure, sport pedagogy, and sport psychology, with a particular focus on where there may be intersection, duplication, obfuscation, and omission between these disciplines. Through this, we – a multidisciplinary writing team – hope to stimulate reflection, dialogue, and action on cross-disciplinary research in Sfd, with a particular focus on transdisciplinary research. While transdisciplinary perspectives *beyond* sport are also imperative to the ongoing growth and development of the Sfd field, a recent special issue published by Haudenhuyse and colleagues (2020) started to explore these perspectives and possibilities. We encourage readers to consider the associated outputs (i.e., special issue and paper) in tandem.

This paper begins with an examination of Sfd disciplinary trends. Next, disciplinary intersections are considered, along with gaps in the Sfd evidence base that are ripe for transdisciplinary research. We conclude with an exploration of possibilities for future transdisciplinary research in Sfd.

Disciplinary Trends

There are distinct lines of research in Sfd within each discipline of study, more often grounded in discipline-specific, rather than transdisciplinary, perspectives (Massey & Whitley, 2019). In this section, we explore these disciplinary trends, with a particular focus on the conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological tendencies. We also identify the dominant research lines in each discipline, along with novel or emerging research topics that may have a significant impact on the Sfd field. While we have adopted a cohesive voice to guide our reflections in this paper, we have also intentionally retained the discipline-specific vocabularies, styles, and structures of communication within this section to underscore disciplinary norms. Each subsection below was written by a leading Sfd scholar with substantial training, education, and knowledge of their ‘home discipline’.

Sport Sociology

From a sociological perspective, Sfd research tends most often to inquire and conduct research along vectors of power and authority. Questions asked most often by sociologists are those such as: Who defines what counts as development in Sfd? On whose authority is Sfd conceptualized, organized, and implemented? And how do these structures and patterns of authority confirm and/or challenge broader social, political, and economic hierarchies? To this end, sociological approaches to Sfd tend to embrace the perspective that sport and development, respectively, are not inherent, neutral, or apolitical but rather historically, politically, and socially constructed. This, then, leads to sociological research that utilizes theories of power, such as neo-Marxist understandings of hegemony and Foucauldian theories of governmentality and bio-power. More recently, post-human and materialist understandings of the significance of non-human actors have also found their way into sociological accounts of Sfd. Overall, these approaches to Sfd have led sociologists concerned with Sfd to think about the ways that

‘evidence’ of sport and/or development is also socially constructed, and often produced and constrained through the same relations of power that underpin the inequities that Sfd programs aim to redress.

The most common or dominant lines of research from a sociological approach to the study of Sfd have focused on whether, and/or to what extent, Sfd programs challenge social inequity versus reproduce it. A most helpful perspective, as discussed above, is that put forth by Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) who differentiate between the dominant and transformative approach to Sfd. In the former, Sfd programs work primarily to ‘teach’ young people how to survive amidst inequity, but stop short of challenging the structures of inequity themselves. By contrast, the latter, or transformative, approach requires critical pedagogy and an activist sensibility to try and change the conditions that create and sustain inequity in the first place. Investigating and assessing Sfd along these kinds of conceptual lines has become a major thread of sociologically-driven Sfd research.

In turn, critical sociologists concerned with Sfd have investigated, and sometimes criticized, the processes by which some people are deemed to be the beneficiaries of Sfd programs and others the stewards. In many cases, this approach has used the recognized sociological categories of race, gender, and class as lenses through which to assess who is seen to be in charge and who in receipt of Sfd. For example, Hayhurst (2013) has analyzed the development idea of the Girl Effect, which posits that investing in girls has cascading development benefits. In her analysis, the Girl Effect serves to make girls the targets of development and Sfd, but often in ways that hail them as responsible for their own success (or failure), a perspective that aligns with the hegemony of neo-liberal philosophy and policies. Similarly, Darnell (2007) has argued that Sfd programs are often organized along racial

hierarchies, in which whiteness stands as a normative, and often unexamined, standard and marker of authority. SfD can, in such cases, reify race rather than challenge racism.

From a methodological perspective, the most novel research in SfD using sociological perspectives has arguably been that which has employed auto-ethnographic techniques to examine and reveal the relations of power and authority in SfD. A preeminent example of this is Forde's (2015) self-assessment of his time as a white Canadian male in Lesotho, in which he uses his own experiences – and his own graphic illustrations of these experiences – as a way to examine issues of spatial privilege, whiteness, and hegemonic masculinity as they are manifest in the context of SfD.

In terms of emerging research, the post-humanist perspective, led by scholars like Darnell (e.g., Darnell et al., 2018), Richelieu and Webb (2019), McSweeney (e.g., McSweeney et al., 2021), and others, has shown that non-human elements of SfD, like bicycles, money, and even the 'facts' of SfD itself, all contribute to the assembling of SfD into a coherent and recognizable social formation. From this perspective, SfD does not simply exist but is "assembled" through a series of human and non-human interactions. In turn, it is incumbent on the sociologist to explain the coherence and (in)stability of the facts of SfD's existence.

Of course, the sociological approach to SfD also presents challenges and limitations. Chief among these is the difficulty of transferring the insights of critical social theory to the practicalities or management of SfD programs. Similarly, sociologists' interests in issues of power and politics are not always shared by those working in SfD, who face the daily challenge of responding to often stark inequities. For these reasons, the sociological analysis of SfD should be combined with other disciplinary approaches.

Social Anthropology

Social anthropology is driven and guided by contextual curiosity. Within Sfd, social anthropologists are drawn to the diverse cultures, people, performances, and rituals of both development and sport (Collison, 2018). Anthropological research in and around Sfd tends to focus on the exploration of specific cultural contexts in which Sfd is managed, employed, and experienced (Collison, 2016). The entry point of exploration is often negotiated through local populations, specific groups (indigenous or social), or organizations who share a sense of curiosity or desire for deeper meaning and knowledge. While many disciplines have well defined lines of engagement and concise points of questioning, anthropology is traditionally more concerned with the mechanisms (in this case, sport and development), localities, social networks, and groups in which to co-create, narrate, and translate information. Therefore, precise questioning is a starting point but open to rigorous reconceptualization throughout a research cycle. Anthropological explorations will focus on social processes and realities, considering the ‘how’ and ‘why’ dynamics of phenomena that exist or are experienced. The notions of power, agency, social organization, sub-culture construction and performances, resilience, motivation, and organizational behavior are central themes for anthropological inquiry within Sfd. However, it is the philosophies, methods, knowledge production, and interpretivist process that distinguishes and complements other disciplinary research within similar contexts (see Burnett, 2014).

Theoretical applications in Sfd are potential bridging mechanisms between anthropology and the interconnecting disciplines of sport sociology, sport psychology, and sport management. While social anthropologists are often influenced by scholars such as Clifford Geertz and his contributions to symbolic anthropology and the translation of knowledge through ‘thick description’ (1973), anthropological accounts of Sfd tend to be theoretically influenced by

sociologists who have cultivated thinking around core concepts such as social capital theory (Putnam, 1993), glocalization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2012), and power (Foucault, 1998). Within Sfd explorations, anthropologists also frequently seek theoretical guidance from fellow anthropologists within interrelated fields of study; for example, social anthropologists focused on relationships in development (Mosse, 2014), contemporary social change (De Sardan, 2005), modernity and personhood (Comoroff & Comoroff, 2001), youthhood (Durham, 2000), and the anthropology *of sport* (Besnier et al., 2018). Theory, therefore, is a multi-layered framing device but the distinction lies in the narration of knowledge and realities by collaborators, gatekeepers, and others who become the features of anthropological research.

The distinction between anthropology and other social sciences is its enhanced emphasis on ethnographic fieldwork, which is considered the most important source of knowledge acquisition, production, and translation (Collison & Marchesseault, 2018). Ethnographic fieldwork goes beyond ‘being present’ within the alien or quasi-familiar realities of others; it requires a commitment to long-term social interaction, intensive rapport building, at times uncomfortable engagements, and sharing the senses and emotions (Marchesseault, 2016; Van Maanen, 2011). The interpersonal nature of ethnographic fieldwork results in rich accounts of Sfd, narrated by the scholar (in first person) but through the voices of those from the field. The sophistication of ethnography is developed through the processes of reflection, interpretation, and sense-making which situates knowledge and realities within broader academic and development discourse (Eriksen, 1995). The methodological principles of social anthropology have sought, over time, to reduce neo-liberal/colonial tensions embedded within Sfd research (Hayhurst, 2009). Ultimately, evidence is provided by local populations, communities, and/or organizations, through their voices and their tutelage on social and cultural phenomena.

Increasingly, anthropologists are less resistant towards their 'expert' identity in their research spaces and are connecting more directly to applied research aims. Working with local populations and organizations to create locally informed change has gained traction and presents another opportunity for social anthropology to interplay with connecting social sciences as the desire and commitment for action research gains momentum. Applied anthropology within SFD promotes the discipline within meso and macro levels of SFD, particularly within institutional structures, beyond the assumed place of social anthropology at the grassroots level (Green, 2003). In another twist to traditional anthropological research, the requirement to explore unknown peoples, cultures, and societies is being contested. At home, ethnography has recently gained traction as a pursuit to gain insight within more familiar yet complex social systems manifested through community sport participation (Dyck, 2012).

Social anthropology has at times sat awkwardly within a fast paced and highly institutionalized SFD sector. The key challenges lie in the requirement for long-term and immersive engagement within fieldwork spaces, a luxury and privilege that many scholars struggle to secure due to funding limitations and the pressures of time. Whilst the intricate and rich findings are often very desirable to academic peers, policymakers, and practitioners, the drive for quantitative validation and the formalized framing of results often leaves anthropological knowledge fixed in the realm of context as opposed to intelligence that can be applied to wider debates and more pragmatic endeavours. Due to this, collaboration with other disciplines allows exploratory approaches, like social anthropology, to thrive and translate to multiple audiences.

Sport Management

Management scholars analyze the managerial aspects of Sfd projects, including the specific tactics, strategies, and implications of sport-related development work that underpin many contemporary initiatives (see Schulenkorf, 2017). The increasing prominence of management as an area of study within Sfd is important for a number of reasons, including current and future planning of projects as well as a strategic move towards growing, leveraging, and sustaining Sfd programs and events for (wider) community benefit (see e.g., Misener et al., 2015; Schulenkorf, 2012; Spaaij, 2012; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Key questions asked by management scholars therefore include: How are Sfd programs designed and implemented to achieve desired outcomes? How can we strategically plan for sustained project delivery? How are communities best empowered to manage programs independently of external support? And which partnerships are critical to grow and leverage program opportunities?

The abovementioned questions indicate that research on managerial aspects in Sfd has largely taken a qualitative stance. In particular, social constructivism and interpretive modes of inquiry have been applied which acknowledge that reality is socially constructed, difficult to measure, and best understood in context (see Glesne, 1999; Schulenkorf et al., 2020). In line with this qualitative stance, the preferred research methods in Sfd management have been interviews and focus group discussions, together with observations and document reviews. However, in recent years there have been calls for new and innovative approaches to research across socio-managerial aspects of sport (see Hoerber & Shaw, 2017), including Sfd-related investigations that feature Indigenous methodologies, participant action research, auto-ethnographies, photo or video documentations, children's drawings, reflective journal pieces, or different forms of art, drama, and dance. While some progress has been made, engagement with non-conventional methods still deserves more attention from Sfd management scholars.

Overall, a great variety of managerial topics has been covered by SfD scholars, but a recent review of literature categorized socio-managerial research under the following four headings: (a) SfD programming and design, (b) sustainable management and capacity building, (c) creating and leveraging impacts and outcomes, and (d) conceptual/theoretical advancements (Schulenkorf, 2017). Importantly, the review also suggested that future studies could more closely attend to the managerial concepts of leadership, entrepreneurship, and Design Thinking to maximize the potential of sport to contribute to innovative and sustained development outcomes. Five years later, all three areas have indeed received increased attention by management scholars. First, leadership is today perhaps the fastest-growing space in SfD management; it includes a variety of investigations into leadership practices and approaches, including shared leadership (Jones et al., 2018, Kang & Svensson, 2019; Svensson et al., 2019), servant leadership (Welty Peachey & Burton, 2017; Welty Peachey et al., 2018a), and new conceptualizations such as cross-border leadership (see Frawley et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship studies have also started to emerge more prominently, including discussions on cause champions and accelerators and their (managerial) roles as social and peace entrepreneurs (see Cohen & Welty Peachey, 2015; McSweeney, 2020; Svensson & Seifried, 2017; Whitley & Welty Peachey, 2020). Finally, the concept of Design Thinking has gained some traction, too, with scholars interested in the organization and implementation of SfD-related innovation (Joachim et al., 2020, 2021).

Looking forward, a number of new exciting opportunities for management scholars exist in the field of SfD, both within and beyond their immediate discipline. For instance, scholars have only started to explore the role of past participants and their post-program connection with the SfD field (e.g., Hoekman et al., 2019). As such, it will be important to conduct future socio-

managerial studies that determine if and how participants stay involved with their own Sfd initiative longer term; how they share, use, and/or transfer their experiences to influence sport or other community development purposes; if they take up coaching or management positions in Sfd programs or if they prefer to move out of the Sfd field; and how their knowledge as ‘former participants turned change agents’ can best be harnessed or leveraged by the field.

Public Health

Public health research has historically used epidemiological and evaluation methods to investigate the following areas: (a) cause of diseases (e.g., what is the prevalence of physical inactivity and how is it related to depression?); (b) effect of interventions (e.g., what is the impact of an Sfd program on depression?); and (c) implementation of interventions (e.g., how is an Sfd program aimed at reducing depression delivered?) (Diderichsen, 2018). Research into causation in public health is underpinned by the hierarchy of evidence, which ranks different study designs according to the level of certainty that a particular exposure (e.g., physical activity participation) leads to a designated outcome (e.g., depression) (Petticrew & Roberts, 2003). The randomized controlled trial is the only intervention study design included in the hierarchy of evidence, but its limitations for research into behavior change initiatives like those delivered in the Sfd field are increasingly being recognized (Petticrew & Roberts, 2003). Over recent years, there has been a growing interest in the value of quasi-experimental study designs and using mixed methods and data triangulation as part of outcome evaluations for public health interventions (Bauman & Nutbeam, 2014). The hierarchy of evidence also has limited utility for process evaluation of program delivery, which is now being addressed by frameworks within the rapidly emerging field of implementation science (e.g., Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research) (Czosnek et al., 2020).

SfD research within the public health discipline can be broadly split into two categories. Firstly, there is an established research agenda on understanding the most effective ways to promote physical activity participation. Public health has historically defined physical activity according to four domains in which it takes place: transportation, occupation, domestic, and leisure-time (Strath et al., 2013). SfD falls within the leisure-time domain, although there have been concerns that SfD interventions track certain outcomes (e.g., cognitive, affective, social) far more than physical activity (Whitley et al., 2019). Thus, participation levels in youth sport and how much this contributes to overall physical activity levels in different sociodemographic populations is an ongoing area of inquiry internationally (Howie et al., 2020). This is accompanied by research on the determinants of physical activity participation, with a particular focus on the efficacy of different intervention and policy approaches for increasing and maintaining this across the lifespan (Howie et al., 2020). Much of this evidence is conceptualized using the socioecological model for behavior change, which is the predominant theoretical framework for describing the determinants of physical activity participation in public health research (Bauman et al., 2012).

Secondly, there is ongoing research investigating the link between physical activity participation and various health outcomes. Most of the research to date has focused on physical health outcomes, which include cardiovascular disease (e.g. heart disease, hypertension), metabolic disease (e.g. diabetes, obesity), and musculoskeletal disease (e.g. osteoporosis, osteoarthritis) (Bull et al., 2020). There is also a rapidly emerging evidence base for the relationship between physical activity and mental illness (e.g. depression, anxiety) (Teychenne et al., 2020). Whilst the physiological link between physical activity and physical health outcomes is well established, there is increasing investigation into understanding the more nuanced

neurobiological, psychosocial, and behavioral mechanisms for positive mental health outcomes (Lubans et al., 2016). It is now recognized that the context in which physical activity takes place is an important ‘dosage’ consideration, which has stimulated further research into the unique health implications of sport and leisure-time physical activity beyond that of the other domains (Howie et al., 2020).

These two lines of research in Sfd from a public health perspective are underpinned by ongoing efforts to improve measurement and surveillance of physical activity and sport participation. Continued advances in technology have fueled innovative research in wearable devices for measuring movement, but this currently has limited reach in several population groups in the Sfd field. There has also been a shift towards a more holistic approach to health globally, which has further opened public health research to concepts of social health and connections with the natural environment. This has been accompanied by an emerging focus on health and wellbeing (as opposed to disease and illbeing), which aligns with a strengths-based approach to Sfd programming. It has also encouraged public health scholars to explore novel approaches to understanding the value of physical activity using economic models to estimate the social return on investment of physical activity and sport interventions (Keane et al., 2019).

Leisure

Leisure scholars have established themselves within the Sfd research space by emphasizing the conceptualization of leisure as a positive youth development (PYD) intervention itself. Leisure has been discussed as a framework for meaning-making, identity development, sense of community, social justice, resistance, and oppression in the lives of youth through both structured and unstructured experiences. In this way, leisure research has broadened the scope of inquiry beyond sport as the impetus for development (although not excluding sport) and studied

numerous leisure spaces in which youth development is centralized. This includes community centers, camps, outdoor spaces, hospitals/institutions, school-based and after-school programs, faith-based organizations, public recreation agencies, social media/electronic spaces, and arts/cultural spaces, among others (Bocarro et al., 2008; Kelly Pryor & Outley, 2014; Pinckney et al., 2020a).

Particularly commonplace in leisure research are connections between leisure experiences and psychosocial outcomes, including meaning-making (Hopper & Iwasaki, 2017), identity development (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000), and sense of community (Fader et al., 2020). As such, leisure research largely adopts positive psychological approaches, with PYD representing the dominant foundation in leisure-focused Sfd scholarship. Yet, it is notable that descriptions of ‘at-risk’ youth (e.g., Hopper et al., 2019) and ‘positive’ leisure interventions to deter ‘delinquent’ leisure behavior (e.g., Berdychevsky et al., 2019) also remain common in the leisure canon. More frequently, leisure research is questioning the role of the environment in the promotion of these youth development outcomes. Such scholarship has emphasized the role of program facilitation, organizational climate (Lower-Hoppe et al., 2020), and youth-adult relationships (Kelly Prior & Outley, 2014; Price & Been, 2018) in facilitating positive youth outcomes, with particular evidence supporting youth-led leisure experiences in the promotion of personal and collective development (Hopper & Iwasaki, 2017; Hopper et al., 2019). Indeed, increased attention is being placed on the role of youth agency and youth cultural norms in promoting positive developmental outcomes. Interestingly, this has also led to the questioning of assumptions that positive development is not occurring unless it is intentionally structured programmatically – demonstrating the potential for positive outcomes to occur during unstructured leisure experiences. For example, McClelland and Giles (2014) found that youth

experiencing homelessness used unstructured leisure activities to formulate close social connections amongst themselves and with members of mainstream society. Meanwhile, Sharpe and colleagues (2019) questioned assumptions that development is not occurring when we allow youth to ‘just chill’ and enact their own agency and personal leisure desires within community centers and leisure spaces.

One novel area of Sfd scholarship that leisure research has championed is the centering of queerness in research paradigms and in the study of leisure in the lives of gender and sexual minority (GSM) youth. For example, Kivel’s (1994) early pioneering work questioned the role of leisure in the personal and social development of GSM youth. Since then, many leisure scholars have furthered this line of inquiry, drawing attention to both oppressive systems in the lives of queer youth (Johnson, 1999) and the opportunities for queer youth to engage in identity affirmation and resistance to heteronormativity through leisure (Gillig et al., 2019; Theriault, 2014). Dykstra and Litwiller (2021) and Litwiller’s (2021) emerging scholarship on the role of ‘genderplay’ in queering youth development is particularly salient in questioning heteronormative assumptions within youth development.

Relatedly, emerging lines of research in leisure are beginning to emphasize the social structuring of leisure spaces, organizations, experiences, and notions of PYD as reflective of dominant social hierarchies and hegemonic (e.g., white supremacist, heteronormative) cultural norms. Such scholarship has questioned whether leisure-based Sfd reflects additional mechanisms of social control over youth instead of a critical, emancipatory lens (Anderson et al., 2021). Thus, leisure scholars are increasingly adopting social justice, critical race, and queer paradigms to leisure-focused youth development research (see Brown et al., 2018; Pinckney et al., 2020b; Theriault, 2019; Theriault & Mowatt, 2020).

The broad nature of leisure as both a philosophy and discipline provides a uniquely promising opportunity for transdisciplinary work. Indeed, leisure scholarship already draws heavily from the theories and methodologies commonplace in other disciplines. However, the ongoing challenges and limitations of leisure's approach to SfD, and indeed more broadly, are found in the integration of a leisure paradigm with other disciplines' theories. For example, it is common to find a sociological or psychological approach to the study of leisure spaces, but less common to find scholarship integrating leisure philosophies (Parr & Schmalz, 2019). As such, leisure is often discussed/implemented as an umbrella for a particular leisure space (i.e., recreation or sport), rather than a philosophy. Thus, leisure-based SfD scholarship will benefit from an intentional integration of leisure philosophy with other disciplinary approaches.

Sport Pedagogy

Sport pedagogy is closely intertwined with physical education pedagogy, with strong but often overlooked relevance to the SfD field (Rossi & Jeanes, 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013; Spaaij et al., 2016). Sport pedagogy scholars study the ways educators (e.g., teachers, coaches) engage with learners (e.g., students, athletes) in the pursuit of educational and developmental aims. Questions in this discipline address a range of topics. Some are broad and open-ended, such as exploring the role of SfD in young people's lived experience (e.g., Jacobs & Wright, 2021). Others are as concrete and pragmatic as assessing the effectiveness of a professional development program for SfD coaches (e.g., Wright et al., 2016). Ultimately, sport pedagogy scholars contribute to the SfD field by examining the intersection of program aims, pedagogical processes, implementation, and learning experiences through positivist, post-positivist, and interpretivist approaches to research. Designs such as quasi-experimental, qualitative case study,

mixed method program evaluation, and action research are common in sport pedagogy (Thomas et al., 2015).

While mainstream pedagogical practices tend to be performance-based, content-centered, and teacher directed, some sport pedagogy scholars have championed more learner-centered, holistic, and democratic approaches. These pedagogical approaches are prominent in sport-based youth development (SBYD; Petitpas et al., 2005) and social and emotional learning (SEL) in physical education (Wright & Richards, 2022), both of which have emerged as novel trends in Sfd scholarship. Research in SBYD and SEL has indicated the need for holistic, youth-centered, and empowering programming, with positive motivational climates and pedagogical processes that foster developmental assets and teach transferable life skills (Hellison et al., 2000; Hemphill et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2019). In fact, recent review articles illustrate the groundswell of interest in ways sport and physical education pedagogy can foster positive affective responses (Teraoka et al., 2020), personal and social skills (Opstoel et al., 2020), and SEL competencies (Dyson et al., 2020).

The notion of models-based practice is driving much of this work, because it provides Sfd programs with a framework for delineating educational aims, processes, structures, and pedagogical strategies. This clarity helps program leaders to train staff, support implementation fidelity, and develop logical and appropriate evaluation plans. Some leading field-tested pedagogical models include Sport Education, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), Cooperative Learning, Adventure-Based Learning, and Service-Learning. Among these, the feasibility and practical effectiveness of the TPSR model has already been demonstrated as a valuable framework for Sfd programs (e.g., Whitley et al., 2017) and training approaches (e.g., Wright et al., 2016; 2018). As an example of what a coherent pedagogical model offers when

integrated into an Sfd program, TPSR is a well-defined but flexible teaching approach focused on democratic and empowering pedagogy (Hellison, 2011). It comes with validated methods for training staff and assessing implementation fidelity including systematic observation tools and implementation checklists (Wright et al., 2016, 2018) as well as validated customized surveys to assess students' enactment of program goals (e.g., personal and social skills) in the program (Li et al., 2008) and the transfer of that learning to other settings (Wright et al., 2019).

Emerging trends in the sport pedagogy literature include the transfer of life skills learned in SBYD programs and physical education settings (Gould & Carson, 2008; Hellison, 2011; Wright et al., 2019). Within this literature, scholars are beginning to identify specific pedagogical strategies that may support the cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes that foster life skills transfer through transformative learning experiences (Jacobs & Wright, 2018). Another emerging trend in the literature is the focus on more critical and emancipatory perspectives on topics such as social justice education, trauma-informed practice, restorative practice, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Wright & Richards, 2022). These perspectives can foster more democratic and emancipatory learning environments in Sfd programs in which local stakeholders are actively involved in identifying problems and generating solutions (Rossi & Jeanes, 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013; Spaaij et al., 2016).

Sport pedagogy as discipline has much to offer the Sfd field, but it does have limitations and challenges. Because this discipline has such a strong focus on educational and developmental experiences that occur inside a program, it often fails to address broader social, cultural, and organizational issues. Pedagogy scholars tend to keep their focus close to the ground and may therefore miss connections to broader factors such as local politics, social hierarchies, policy change, and organizational management. Such factors shape the reality of

programs and can serve as barriers or facilitators to progress. Failure to recognize these contextual layers may limit a sport pedagogy scholar's ability to design, support, and/or interpret programs effectively. Working alongside collaborators with other disciplinary perspectives, a pedagogy scholar may be more likely to factor in the larger systems and influences that impact a program. This would make them better equipped to support culturally responsive pedagogy in context.

Sport Psychology

Many sport psychology scholars have embraced PYD as a lens for examining the developmental aspects of sport, from Sfd programs to more traditional youth sport settings (i.e., school sport, club sport) (Holt, 2016). PYD *through sport* should facilitate youth development through experiences and processes that result in the acquisition of transferable personal and social life skills (along with physical competencies) (Holt et al., 2016). These skills and competencies are thought to enable youth to “thrive and contribute to their communities, both now and in the future” (Holt et al., 2016, p. 231).

With PYD as the dominant lens through which sport psychology scholars engage in Sfd scholarship, common research questions center on the psychological, social, and emotional outcomes associated with youth sport participation, along with the development and transfer of life skills. Life skills research (e.g., Kendellen & Camiré, 2017) can be viewed as a specific and more focused approach that falls under the overall PYD umbrella. Additionally, sport psychology scholars examine the contextual features of PYD-based sport programs, hoping to enhance their understanding of which programs work, for whom, and under what circumstances. The majority of sport psychology PYD research has used qualitative approaches (primarily interview-based studies) underpinned by interpretivist or constructionist paradigms. Researchers

have also developed sport-specific questionnaires which have been used in cross-sectional studies to examine relations between psychosocial variables and PYD or life skills outcomes. Intervention research is rare in the sport psychology PYD domain.

To give a brief overview, early psychological research involved the application of PYD theories and models from developmental psychology. For example, Lerner and colleagues' (2011) 5Cs model offered a way of assessing psychosocial outcomes associated with sport participation (see Jones et al., 2011), while Larson's domains of learning provided a way to assess young people's development (i.e., initiative, identity exploration, emotional learning, teamwork skills) in extracurricular activities (Hansen et al., 2003). The resulting Youth Experience Survey (Hansen et al., 2003) was later adapted to sport by MacDonald et al. (2012). Finally, Benson's (1997) developmental assets framework depicted 40 external (i.e., contextual) and internal (i.e., personal) assets that youth need for successful development, accentuating the role that community plays in PYD. Strachan et al. (2009) examined this framework within youth sport settings, concluding that positive identity, empowerment, and support were particularly pertinent.

Developmental psychology research drove some of the early theoretical developments in the PYD through sport literature as well (e.g., Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas et al., 2005). More recently, there has been a shift toward creating sport-specific theories of PYD underpinned by the burgeoning sport-specific literature. For example, Holt et al. (2017) presented a grounded theory of PYD through sport following a systematic review of qualitative research in this area. The resulting model of PYD through sport highlights specific PYD outcomes (in personal, social, and physical domains) that can be realized when a PYD climate is in place, with more explicit learning facilitated through intentional activities that help

youth build and transfer life skills. Another model comes from Pierce and colleagues (2017), who outlined a sport-specific definition and model of life skills. Essentially, this model postulates that life skills transfer is an ongoing process as youth interact with and interpret their sport environments, ultimately producing positive or negative life skills transfer outcomes. A third sport-specific model of PYD within the sport psychology discipline is from Whitley and colleagues (2018), who described a systems theory of development through sport for youth who have experienced complex and developmental trauma and were raised in under-resourced communities. This systems theory identified four leverage points that send ripples throughout the system: (a) embodied physicality and competition, (b) change in youth-environment interactions, (c) developmentally-focused sport environment, and (d) positive community development. A common thread across all three models is the interaction between individuals and their social environments; these are the building blocks for understanding ways to promote positive developmental outcomes.

As the field of PYD through sport continues to mature, it is likely that more sophisticated studies will examine what features of PYD-based sport programs work, under what circumstances, and for whom (Bruner et al., 2021; Holt et al., 2013). Scholars have developed some important sport-specific measures of PYD, such as the Youth Experience Survey-Sport (MacDonald et al., 2012), the Life Skills Transfer Survey (Weiss et al., 2014), and the Life Skills Scale for Sport-Transfer Scale (Mossman et al., 2021). These measures will enable scholars to pursue a wider range of research projects, including intervention studies examining the effectiveness of sport-based PYD programs and longitudinal research evaluating the long-term impact of PYD through sport (see Holt et al., 2020).

Intersections and Possibilities

This paper set out to critically review the current foci and research trends across different areas of Sfd scholarship. Taken together, our reflective findings highlight a number of key issues and concerns, as well as opportunities for increased cross-disciplinary engagement – with a particular focus on transdisciplinary research.

First, there is a tendency toward staying within disciplinary boundaries, with lines of research developing that, at times, duplicate or obfuscate Sfd research in other disciplines. For instance, there is extensive overlap between sport psychology and sport pedagogy scholars regarding their interest in life skill development and transfer. However, despite their common interests and approaches, the literature demonstrates a tendency for scholars in each area to ‘stay in their own lane’ rather than seek out opportunities to collaborate, share insights, or at least read the work of those outside of their field. Similarly, PYD is the lens through which leisure and sport psychology scholars study the developmental aspects of sport, yet these scholars rarely cross disciplinary lines in any substantive manner. Extending this example, PYD shares similarities (e.g., perspectives, theoretical influences) with the anthropological examination of youth in Sfd, and yet these scholars tend to stay within disciplinary boundaries. Another example comes in the form of the socio-ecological model, which is shared by several disciplines, but has been represented in multiple iterations with different nuances.

Remaining firmly embedded within one discipline can result in missed opportunities or gaps in the evidence base, which has unfolded in all disciplines represented in this paper. For example, sociological scholars, at times, overlook managerial implications of their work, while management scholars sometimes recommend programmatic changes without taking account of relations of power, the histories of inequity, or the ways in which both sport and development are socially constructed. Another exemplar comes from the public health discipline. Public health

scholars were critiqued in the past for taking a deficit-approach to ‘problem definition’ and ‘needs assessments’ (Tobi et al., 2014), rather than the strengths-based approach emphasized in other disciplines. This resulted in a plethora of research examining the potential for SfD programs to “treat” disease and illbeing (e.g., heart disease, depression), but a relative paucity of investigation into the promotion of health and wellbeing outcomes (e.g., cardiovascular health, happiness). The shift towards leveraging the strengths within a community as a starting point for programs has direct implications for practitioners, particularly when engaging difficult-to-reach communities that may be further marginalized by only focusing on their challenges at the outset. In practice, it also ensures that programs delivered are aligned with development objectives that are already valued by the participating communities.

There are a number of explanations for this tendency to retreat to one’s discipline (e.g., comfort, education, norms), but a contributing factor may be the colonialization of space within SfD scholarship. Specifically, each discipline may engage in, or support a culture of, protectionism built on notions of the “purest ideals” of what counts as evidence and what research is most valuable. This is not to say that scholars in different disciplines are not influenced or informed by one another, but that acknowledgements of other works and disciplines may happen in a non-collaborative or intradisciplinary way (e.g., pluralism in thought, insular in action). This means that even when the lines of connection across disciplines are understood, they are often not experienced, explored, or advanced in depth. This, in turn, may connect to deeper issues of identity within the Sfd field and the evolving professionalization (or institutionalization) of the field, one in which scholars seek to justify not only Sfd broadly, but their discipline’s role within that field – as well as their own position as a scholar. Thus, Sfd scholars tend to refer to scholarship within other disciplines as a means for

setting up their own research and/or positioning their discipline within the broader Sfd landscape, but engaging in cross-disciplinary research is less common (especially transdisciplinarity, which requires the greatest integration). Traditional modes of publication – in which academic outlets exist largely within disciplinary silos and for which discipline-specific standards are expected or rewarded – likely only add further barriers to achieving transdisciplinary work, as do university norms around lines of research and disciplinary expertise related to promotion, tenure, and prestige. These barriers are real and, we would say, concerning, given that in its existence and practice, Sfd is itself transdisciplinary, and therefore requiring of a research approach that is in line with this fact.

Of course, there are significant examples of disciplinary influences and intersections in Sfd that might serve as models or inspiration. The maturation of pedagogy research within Sfd is in large part due to the integration of knowledge, theory, and practice from complementary disciplines. Specifically, the growing commitment among sport pedagogy scholars to addressing culturally relevant pedagogy, social justice, and other critical issues is influenced by sport sociologists, while pedagogical research with a strong focus on physical activity promotion connect with a public health perspective. Additionally, there has arguably been some overlap in Sfd research between the sociological understandings of race, class, and gender and the psycho-social experiences of marginalized people, with sport psychology research being particularly useful in understanding individuals' experiences in Sfd programs. From a conceptual perspective, a multidisciplinary contribution has recently been proposed by Schulenkorf and Siefken (2019). Their Sport-for-Health Model was developed as a flexible conceptual tool that establishes the nexus between sport management, health promotion, sociocultural development, policy, and sustainability. As such, it allows for scholarly engagement from a range of

perspectives, including (but not limited to) public health, management, sociology, politics, psychology, and pedagogy.

While multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships are not yet common, there are increasing instances of this cross-disciplinary work. For instance, Holt and colleagues examined the impact of a ball hockey Sfd program from sport psychology and sport sociology perspectives, enabling the joint exploration of personal and social benefits along with structural constraints (e.g., economic and labor conditions) the participants were experiencing (Holt et al., 2013; Scherer, Koch, & Holt, 2016). Another example comes from collaborations between management and sociology scholars, where fruitful partnerships have led to the joint examination of research questions and practical implications. For instance, sociological questions about the socially and politically fraught nature of being an international volunteer in Sfd have led to considerations of the managerial implications regarding how or whether an organization should send volunteers abroad. Another fruitful collaboration occurred between Collison and colleagues (2016), who embraced an interdisciplinary perspective in their cross-cultural comparative research study exploring multiple international Sfd contexts. The research was shaped by the disciplinary make-up and expertise of the research team, utilizing multiple approaches and influences from anthropology and sociology. The result was a process of learning and unlearning, in order to apply a variety of participatory fieldwork approaches to engage (differently but with the same objective) in the ethnographic fieldwork process. The practical implications of this interdisciplinary approach were significant, both for the research outcomes and the expansion of researcher knowledge and skills. In particular, the research process and findings were able to influence and inform multiple audiences and stakeholders at the policy level and within intervention spaces. This included the

empowerment of participants and young leaders to share their knowledge and influence future directions.

Another example of an interdisciplinary team at Northern Illinois University brought together faculty from sport pedagogy, sport psychology, sport management, and athletic training to design, deliver, evaluate, and publish findings from two-way exchange Sfd training programs for sport coaches in Belize (Wright et al., 2016). Not only did the faculty from different disciplines come together in this ongoing project (currently in its eighth year), they involved graduate and undergraduate students in learning about working on a multidisciplinary team in partnership with local stakeholders (Jacobs et al., 2020). These are a few examples of the growing number of dynamic and diverse research teams in Sfd (e.g., Football 4 Peace; Schulenkorf et al., 2014), though there still seems to be uncertainty about the entry point, fear of crossing disciplinary lines, and even protection of disciplinary expertise.

Recognizing this, we suggest that the Sfd field could learn from norms within the social sciences more broadly, based on networks of influence and information sharing. In particular, sociology, psychology, and anthropology all share common theoretical influences but offer differing methodological commitments, entry points into contexts, and conceptualizations of evidence in various interpretative, constructivist, and positivist ways. The question is, how can Sfd scholars commit to this type of transdisciplinary approach?

One entry point could be to explore the connection that scholars share regarding the commitment to (or seduction of) sport as a mechanism for change within diverse contexts and phenomena. Another entry point should be the transdisciplinary nature of Sfd, requiring a holistic approach to Sfd research. The evidence base in Sfd is to the point where an exclusive or bordered approach to Sfd research is limiting (Darnell et al., 2016; Massey & Whitley, 2019).

Instead, diverse conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological tendencies should be viewed as building blocks rather than obstacles, and different conceptualizations of evidence should be explored rather than overlooked. Ultimately, a shared commitment to SfD, an appreciation for diverse disciplinary perspectives, and an interest in closing in on the gestalt of SfD should soften the ground for transdisciplinary research. For example, sport management scholars have enlightened the SfD landscape with accounts of SfD impacts and theories of change, with these accounts often packaged in a neat, well-structured, and well-defined recollection of operational processes and relationships. It is the “neatness” sport management provides that then creates the context for anthropologists to explore the “messiness” of social process, cultures, sport, and development. In collaboration, anthropologists and sport management scholars could highlight the multi-realities and messiness while seeking the straight lines to translate to the SfD field more broadly. Within the context of SfD practice, this is very helpful, as practitioners can apply contextually grounded theory of change methodologies in the knowledge that local specificity can work within rigid frameworks for positive outcomes in context appropriate ways.

While transdisciplinary research fully integrates disciplinary perspectives, this does not need to be the first step into cross-disciplinary research. The degree of integration steadily increases as researchers shift from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinarity to transdisciplinarity, with blurred lines between these categories, and so it may be prudent to begin with multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity research (Adler & Stewart, 2010; Stokols et al., 2013). These collaborations and partnerships can facilitate honest, reflective, and constructive discussions and contributions about SfD research within and across disciplines, deconstructing borders that have been drawn within a transdisciplinary field. This could include efforts to

harmonize language and terminology in the Sfd field, which would also reduce duplication in effort and enhance sharing and learning across disciplines. Additionally, scholarly collaborations could demonstrate impact on a broader range of measures for the complex constructs that Sfd programs aim to address. For example, public health scholars have the capacity to support other disciplines in establishing ‘causation’ through various study designs and mixed methods approaches, along with guidance in measurement development for complex constructs that have not been well quantified historically (e.g., subjective wellbeing, physical activity participation). This would broaden the scope for practitioners to demonstrate the impact of their programs on a broad range of development outcomes in ways not previously defined. Additionally, public health scholars could collaborate with scholars from other disciplines to further develop novel qualitative methods and constructs within the Sfd sector. For instance, leisure scholars have broadened the scope of leisure inquiry beyond the construct of ‘time’ common in public health inquiry (i.e., leisure-time), emphasizing instead the nuanced psycho-social components to leisure. This may have critical practical implications by opening up the relatively rigid approach to study design and construct development within the public health discipline that has historically emphasized causation.

Ideally, these multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships would lead to transdisciplinary research teams conducting collective research that is holistic, representing diverse conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological approaches. These transdisciplinary research teams could then explore more complex and meaningful research questions (Massey & Whitley, 2019), such as the ways in which PYD aligns or contrasts with the dominant and transformative approaches within the Sfd paradigm (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Again, the benefits of this would be Sfd practice that is connected to a

program theory or theory of change, and strives to work with participants to challenge or transform social conditions, rather than teaching participants to survive amidst inequity. Another research question that would benefit from a transdisciplinary approach is the push-pull between the value of structured, adult-led programming compared with unstructured, youth-led experiences (Bowers & Green, 2013). Both of these research questions open up the possibility of transdisciplinary teams working towards a better understanding of (and stronger evidence for) how Sfd programs reach certain outcomes (i.e., the ‘magical black box’; Coalter, 2007) – particularly those that have been hard to measure historically (i.e., ‘soft’ outcomes).

Transdisciplinary research teams could also facilitate a systems approach to Sfd research (Stokols et al., 2013), with “the study of multiple systems levels (e.g., microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem), across various levels of influence (e.g., individual, school, community, policy) and influencers (e.g., parents, peers, youth workers, funders, governments, corporations), and the interaction of these factors over time and within an historical context” (Massey & Whitley, 2019, p. 181). This approach recognizes that Sfd programs are not operating within linear, organized confines but are actually enmeshed in a dynamic, messy, interconnected world (Burns & Worsley, 2015). Rather than studying Sfd with a reductionist approach, where scholars dissect complexity into manageable – and often discipline-specific – parts, transdisciplinary research teams taking a systems approach would embrace this complexity, seeking to understand the whole and the parts concurrently (i.e., synthesis).

Additionally, systems thinking creates the potential for these teams to approach research as a strategic asset in partnership with Sfd programs, participants, policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders, rather than an after-thought. This type of collaboration should begin with careful consideration of who is involved at all stages of the research process, from local voices

and Indigenous scholars to youth voices and program staff – and the programmatic and epistemological assumptions therein (Nicholls et al., 2011; Schulenkorf & Spaaij, 2015). This aligns with one conceptualization of transdisciplinary research, which requires active and meaningful engagement with non-academic partners (Pineo et al., 2021; Stokols et al., 2013). Through this engagement, transdisciplinary research teams can facilitate comprehensive systems mapping, which builds on the existing socio-ecological model and identifies leverage points for optimizing the reach and impact of Sfd programs (Burns & Worsley, 2015). Systems mapping can also ascertain feedback loops, upstream influences, and downstream patterns affecting Sfd programs, whether they be historical, structural, community, and/or individual. This, in turn, would enhance understandings of causality within dynamic and constantly evolving systems. Ultimately, this could also facilitate more intentionality around practical and policy implications from research, such as taking theories, data, and critiques and integrating and operationalizing them into different and better policies, programs, and outcomes. For example, robust and holistic system understandings of how and why sport contributes to meeting development goals (or not) can be integrated into theoretical insights that can be applied to subsequent cases and contexts.

Recommendations

With the above discussion in mind, in this section, we – a multidisciplinary writing team – propose a set of specific, actionable takeaways that can support more collaborations and partnerships across the Sfd field. In so doing, we recognize the need for progressive phases of change at multiple levels of influence (i.e., individuals, journals, universities, funders, etc.), but nonetheless we aim to offer a framework for responding to the systemic and seemingly intractable nature of siloing in Sfd. Below are some early-phase actions that could enable more

collaborations and partnerships, perhaps sending ripples throughout the Sfd field that might make transdisciplinary research (and subsequent practice and policymaking) more likely.

First, there is a need for safe, supportive spaces where honest, reflective, and constructive discussions on Sfd research within and across disciplines can unfold (i.e., communities of practice). These forums could look and be different and diverse in nature, and include weekly or monthly sessions among graduate students, early career scholars, and/or more advanced scholars that focus on specific projects or topics. From a practical Sfd perspective, first steps have already been taken. For instance, together with key partners, the International Platform on Sport and Development (sportanddev.org) has organized a number of webinars on contemporary Sfd topics – including sport for refugees – that have included a diverse group of practitioners, scholars, and policymakers. Building on such initiatives, the research community could, for instance, conduct an Sfd conference that focuses on key societal issues and in doing so, examine and deconstruct disciplinary borders. As a writing team, our promise is to organize one session in the next year which centers transdisciplinary research within Sfd, with a global call to scholars to join this discussion. There will be particular focus on surfacing barriers, brainstorming solutions, sharing ideas, and exploring possibilities as a global community of scholars. Ultimately, we hope to cultivate a community where we can be more generous with our knowledge as we explore transdisciplinary research together, widening (or even transcending) the scope of our individual disciplines.

Second, finding outlets for publication of transdisciplinary work can be a challenge. Although there is some evidence of openness towards accepting and valuing transdisciplinary perspectives, this is largely shaped by individual editorial preference as well as influence. It has been our experience that high-quality cross-disciplinary research finds a home even in traditional

journals if it is indeed recognized as more robust and complete, and therefore ‘better’ research. To encourage a collective shift across the publishing landscape, there is a need to re-envision norms such that collaborative and collective work (and the scholars producing this work) receive greater support. For example, when receiving a paper that crosses disciplinary lines or uses an unfamiliar writing style, journal editors and reviewers could consider the broader contributions to the Sfd knowledge base and the benefits of shared learning, rather than the knee-jerk reaction we sometimes have in feeling overly rigid or protective of our disciplinary spaces. It may even be prudent for journals to create a new submission category that welcomes cross-disciplinary work, or perhaps an award for research that transcends disciplinary boundaries, thereby facilitating conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological innovations that advance the Sfd field. Another consideration for journals may be the benefits of single blind or open peer review processes. Might these encourage a more transparent and, quite frankly, kinder review process, particularly for early career scholars and/or those seeking to cross, merge, or deconstruct disciplinary lines? Another possibility, to which we will commit as a writing team (and individually), is to identify key points during a research project when intentional reflections and discussions are held about the disciplinary boundaries, cross-disciplinary influences, and interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary possibilities. This does not mean that every research question requires a cross-disciplinary approach, but there should be thoughtful consideration of the most suitable approach. Such reflections promise to be rich and insightful; at times, they may even present a starting point for new or extended research around a particular topic or phenomenon. This scholarly engagement could (and should) begin during the project ideation phase, but may well continue throughout data collection and into data analysis. From a communications perspective, we propose that these procedural steps should be clearly outlined in

the methodology section of academic papers, as a valuable and necessary part of any transparent Sfd study.

Third, we are aware that collaborations, partnerships, and teams take time to develop, with relationships and trust at the heart of this type of work. This can present a barrier to those who are limited by time (e.g., university or familial responsibilities, need to publish quickly to earn tenure), resources (e.g., access to technology and reliable internet), and knowledge (e.g., minimal guidance on cross-disciplinary research). Given these challenges, we must consider steps we can all take to build relationships with emerging and established scholars in other disciplines, along with pathways where emerging scholars can cultivate relationships and seek opportunities for collaboration with one another. For example, established scholars with students interested in Sfd research could organize meetings with research teams in other disciplines, with a focus on building connections, sharing knowledge, and exploring opportunities for collaboration. There could also be a type of informal mentorship, where scholars meet with students from other disciplines to share their perspectives and experiences studying Sfd. This focus on relationships and knowledge exchange sets the stage for collaborative and collective work, although there is still limited guidance on cross-disciplinary research in the Sfd field. With this in mind, our commitment, as a writing team, is to envision and then activate a transdisciplinary research project that will benefit the field, detailing each step we take to allow others to learn from our experiences.

Finally, we must recognize the benefits of building transdisciplinary research teams that include non-academic partners. Stokols and colleagues (2013) identified this as a key demarcation between interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, with transdisciplinary research teams engaging scholars and practitioners to “work collaboratively at the nexus of their

knowledge domains” (p. 4). These collaborations and partnerships are more likely to explore relevant and meaningful research questions, enabling the creation and/or adaptation of programs and policies that are innovative, evidence-based, and feasible. To do this, scholars should consider the inclusion of non-academic partners throughout the research process, from ideation, design, and funding to data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Additionally, funders could create – and scholars could identify – funding streams that are established for research teams that engage scholars, practitioners, and other stakeholders (e.g., policymakers) as joint investigators. As a writing team, we are committed to identifying existing funding streams for this type of collaborative work, and plan to seek funding for our transdisciplinary research project. This will allow us to map the funding landscape for this type of transdisciplinary work, test relevant funding streams, and (indirectly) promote any successful funding sources.

Conclusion

The nature of academia steers us to affiliate ourselves with a particular discipline. A strength in this model is that we tend to become steeped in the literature on a certain topic, developing expertise and precision in articulating and examining very specific issues. However, as we develop this deep but narrow focus, we become accustomed to wearing blinders (i.e., blinkers). We forget that these disciplines, theories, and questions we ask are constructed and somewhat arbitrary. As a whole tapestry, we are taking a very comprehensive look at Sfd and generating great insights, but often in isolation (i.e., silos). We easily forget that we are only seeing one angle, asking a fairly narrow set of questions, and usually communicating our insights only with people wearing matching blinders. This fragmented approach is not how people, programs, or communities work. They are complex, dynamic, and integrated. Each discipline represented here, and others that are not, have great contributions to make, yet each of us holds

just one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. This does not necessarily mean we need to hold more pieces, but there are benefits to working with colleagues who contribute their pieces to the puzzle. In other words, as a scholarly community, we will benefit from understanding the conceptual, theoretical, philosophical, and methodological approaches of the different disciplines. Such a transdisciplinary approach allows us all to work from our strengths, yet see how our strengths fit into the whole. Developing this broader perspective and a greater degree of collaboration can only enhance this synergy, making our collective contributions to people, programs, and communities even stronger. Perhaps this may also lead to increased recognition of the Sfd field in and of itself, rather than as a sub-discipline buried in numerous disciplinary siloes.

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