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ISSP position stand: Social missions through sport and exercise psychology

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ISSP position stand: Social missions through sport and exercise psychology

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Sport psychology is expanding in how it might be utilised to benefit human activity and social life. Performance enhancement remains central to the field; however, there is growing interest in how sport psychology practices and sport contexts can be crafted to enable social missions. The classification of social missions through the context of sports might vary from one sport development agency or scholar to the next, and could relate to health and well-being, sport for peace, social development, disease prevention, and positive youth development. This position stand has been conceived to situate the *International Society of Sport Psychology* within sport for development for the betterment of people in communities, countries, and regions. This ISSP Position Stand is structured into a historical overview of sports as social missions, sport for cultural exchange and social justice, sport for health and well-being, sport for positive youth development, sport for peace, and postulations and recommendations.

Keywords: sport for development; cultural praxis; local practices; cultural safety

There is growing interest in how sport and exercise psychology relates to the topic area of social missions through sport, whereby sport becomes a sociocultural context to enable social missions (Guest, 2013; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2012). Social missions undertaken through sport and physical activity contexts vary in application, such as in a platform for AIDS awareness and prevention (Maro, Roberts, & Sørensen, 2009), as an alternative to differential association in inner cities (Hartmann, 2001), to educate people about the dangers of landmines (UNICEF, 2005), teach resilience skills in orphanages (Hanrahan, 2012), empower underprivileged women through physical activity (Frisby, Reid, Miller, & Hoeber, 2005), foster/support peace (Galily, Leitner, & Shimion, 2013; Keim, 2012), and support community capacity (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier, & Pheasant, 2011).

The *International Platform on Sport for Development* provides social missions that serve as umbrellas, synthesised into sport and (a) education, and child/youth development, (b) peacebuilding, (c) disability, (d) disease response, (e) health, (f) gender, (h) economic development, and (i) child protection (http://www.sportanddev.org). Classifications are as vast as the agencies attempting such work; the aforementioned platform lists more than 200 agencies.

Discussions about social missions through sport are evidenced by a growing number of publications (see Kidd, 2008). We overviewed the origins of this work, and found that some

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researchers have engaged in social mission work from the vantage of sport sociology, such as Bairner (2013), Hartmann (2001), and Sugden (2008). Schinke and Cole (2011) also guest edited the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* relating to this topic, and Galily (2013) guest edited the journal *Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* focusing on sport for peace. Holt (2008), Schinke and Hanrahan (2012), and Schinke and Lidor (2013) extended this area into sport and exercise psychology. With growing interest in sport contexts that can serve as social missions, the *International Society of Sport Psychology* supports this work.

The origins of social missions through sport predate the modern Olympic movement (Kidd, 2008). These missions trace to Ancient Greece when sport was considered a setting aiming at the development and exhibition of "arête" (Miller, 2004). Arête is translated as "virtue" but its intended meaning is "excellence of any kind" (Liddell & Scott, 1940). In the birthplace of the Olympic Games, sport was considered a context to promote the betterment of the person and society; evidenced both in ancient Greek texts and in ancient sport traditions connected with sport excellence. This does not imply that ancient Greeks participated in Games without rivalry and conflict. Nevertheless, as Reid (2009) pointed out, the ancient Pan-Hellenic Games (Olympia, Pythian, Nemea, Isthmian) and the ancient Olympic Festival were linked with peace, friendship, and unity among Greeks.

According to sport historians such as Parry (2009) and Reid (2009), the atmosphere of the Olympic Festival combined religion and sport with humanitarian principles to establish peace. Although Olympic Games failed to eradicate war, the declaration of the Olympic Truce, a call that remains to present day (see http://www.olympictruce.org/index.php?lang=en), brought people of diverse backgrounds together to engage in rule-governed, non-violent struggle. The ancient Olympic Games, which is one of the longest surviving institutions in human history (from 786 BC to 344 AC), were organised during the fourth and fifth days of the celebrations of the father of Gods (Zeus). The Olympic winners gained an olive wreath. These modest rewards were used to celebrate the exhibition of arête and champions' societies. Herodotus (Histories, Book 8 "Urania", paragraph 26) described the surprise of Persian King Xerxes when he heard that most Greeks travelled to Olympia for the Olympic Games instead of fighting him in the Battle of Thermopylae. Upon hearing that the prize in Olympic Games was an olive wreath, the Persian general uttered: "what kind of men are these against whom you have brought us to fight, who make their contest not for money but for 'arête'!"

Miller (2004) illuminated how Olympic sport was connected with ancient Greeks' quest for arête. Miller's translation of the games in Homer's Iliad illustrates that Greeks conceived winning in games to be the outcome of superior effort, superior performance with the assistance of Gods, and superior ability which had been developed during prolonged body–mind education. So spoke Nestor, having told his son "the way to win" (Miller, p. 2–3). Winning should also be the result of good sportspersonship (e.g. "Menelaos called out: 'Antilochos, … you won't get the prize without swearing that you played fair!' Miller, p. 4). In ancient Greece, the education of spirit, mind, and body took place in gymnasia where physical trainers, sophists, and philosophers interacted with youth to provide holistic education and development contributing to excellence of any kind (arête). Famous philosophical schools such as the Academy of Plato and Lyceum of Aristotle were gymnasia where youngsters trained body and mind to develop "arête".

Pierre de Coubertin – father of the modern Olympic Games, established the Olympic Congresses to study the educational and moral aspects of sport and foresaw the role of sport and exercise psychology in the promotion of Olympic ideas. He emphasised intellectual and philosophical aspects including topics on "psychology of physical exercise" in the Olympic Congress and organised the Olympic Congress on Psychology and Physiology of Sport in Lausanne in 1913 (Kornspan, 2007). Since the early years of the modern Olympic Movement, sport as a context for social missions has been taken up by the International Olympic Committee's Olympic

Solidarity Movement (see Kidd, 2008), with a focus on providing opportunities to elite athletes from impoverished countries and countries in conflict. Recently, one of the authors attended a world sport event and witnessed this access extending to a few Palestinian athletes and their personal coach in advance of the tournament, in the form of coaching education, expert support, and free equipment. These initiatives are termed "sport development projects" where the athlete's career is facilitated, in contrast to "sport for development projects", or, social missions through sport, where emphasis shifts to positive social changes (see Kidd, 2008). Social missions through sport can also extend beyond personal and community development to sustainable economic development and the amelioration of injustice (Schinke & Hanrahan, 2012).

Social missions through sport were spotlighted through the efforts of Olympic athletes, led by speed skater Johann Olav Koss. Koss raised finances for disadvantaged children through the Olympic Aid Program (which in 1996 partnered with UNICEF). The programme began with vaccination efforts in countries with/in conflict, including Afghanistan and Iraq. The movement evolved into the non-governmental agency Right to Play in 2000. Right to Play promotes education, health, peace, and community development (http://www.righttoplay.com), and it is among a growing list of agencies focused on social missions through sport (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sport_for_social_development).

Not every sport for development project is successful, due to the lack of appreciation of local realities and limited local engagement (see Guest, 2013; Schinke & Lidor, 2013; Spaaij, 2009). The argument has been made that projects created from outside of local communities tend to be devoid of cultural context, resulting in interventions that might be irrelevant in terms of focus or approach, not collaborative, and/or without adequate community engagement. There must also be carefully crafted research methodologies to reveal local community/regional practices (Blodgett et al., 2011; Guest, 2013; Spaaij, 2009). These methodologies are ones that might be deemed appropriate by the intended community, such as the qualitative approaches outlined within the sport for peace segment of this position stand in relation to work with Israeli and Palestinian youth, or localised versions of participatory action research, such as Blodgett and colleagues have utilised within a Canadian Indigenous community. Thus, scholars can benefit from a position stand where suggestions and examples are provided in relation to topic areas pertinent within sport and exercise psychology. Furthermore, within each section, there is reference to "culture" and "reflexivity". These terms are meant to encourage awareness, that social missions are locally derived, highly organic, and culturally saturated (see Schinke & Lidor, 2013). The underlying reason for the continuous use of these terms (i.e. power, reflexivity, local, and cultural) is to reveal the axes of power in existence in social missions. These axes must centralise the intended community over external staff and researchers to prevent programmes from faltering.

The objective of this ISSP position stand is to unveil how sport and physical activity can promote social missions that intersect with most traditional sport and exercise psychology scholarship, such as facilitating intercultural understanding and social justice, health and well-being, positive youth development, and peace. In the following sections, these social missions will be defined and related to contemporary sport and exercise research and to applied projects executing these missions. We propose that the forthcoming social missions be viewed as Velcro (see Peterson, 2000) trajectories that meld in a way whereby any given project might belong in several trajectories depending on presentation. The position stand will end with postulates and recommendations.

Sport for cultural exchange and social justice

From the aforementioned ancient Olympic movement, the ideal of the "Olympic truce" sought to bring various peoples and cultures together in peace. International sporting competitions and

festivals provide a venue for fostering mutual understanding among diverse sociocultural groups through intensified interpersonal cultural exchange on an individual, institutional, and global scale. The shared language of sport has the potential to impact people by enhancing global awareness, respect, and understanding of diversity in a safe context.

The long-standing belief in social virtues of sport has led many societies to harness it as a tool of social integration and societal cohesion, and a means of empowering the disadvantaged in society. In a Norwegian study of physical activity levels of immigrant youths, Sagatun, Kolle, Anderssen, Thoresen, and Sogaard (2008) emphasised the role of sport and physical activity as a way to actively integrate immigrants into the host society. It has been further argued that sport can build and retain community networks (especially following dislocation of migration), promote and affirm difference, dispel stereotypes, enhance cultural pride and intercultural relations, and facilitate the development of adaptive identity towards the goal of social integration (Hanlon & Coleman, 2006; Morela, Hatzigeorgiadis, Kouli, Elbe, & Sanchez, 2013; Taylor, 2001).

However, the cultural sphere of sport is complex and also has destructive sides, such as violence, corruption, exploitation, discrimination, nationalism, and fraud in local and international contexts. Therefore, critical scholars have challenged the underlying assumption of the instrumental role of sport for societal goods, asserting that the research-based evidence of sport's social impacts is unsatisfactory (Coalter, 2013; Donnelly, Darnell, Wells, & Coakley, 2007; Elling, De Knop, & Knoppers, 2001). Moreover, there is a plethora of sport research into experiences of minority (in terms of power) athletes and coaches, suggesting that sport is sometimes a site of social exclusion and psychological violence (e.g. Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Krane & Barber, 2005; Ryba & Schinke, 2009). Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge the potential of sport to produce both positives and negatives: instigating progressive social change or reproducing social inequalities. Following Weiss and Bredemeier's (1983) assessment of sport participation for young athletes' development, we suggest that to achieve desired developmental outcomes with respect to intercultural dialogue and social justice, programmes should be conceived and structured to increase the likelihood that project leaders become aware of their influences and non-influences (see European Federation of Sport Psychology, 1996; Schinke, McGannon, Parham, & Lane, 2012).

Brief overview of work in the area

Advocating for the development of inclusive sport settings, scholars in our field addressed issues of social justice primarily from the perspective of cultural diversity and intersectionality of identity (i.e. consideration of people's various social locations). Sport is a masculine domain, traditionally reserved for young, strong, heterosexual males (see Lenskyj, 1990; Messner, 1992). Therefore, the cultural practices in most sports marginalise female, gay, ageing, racialised bodies that are socially constructed in opposition to white heterosexual masculine standards, taken as normative in defining and giving meaning to sport activities. Critical sport and exercise researchers have argued it imperative to demystify the organising principles and exercise of power in sporting contexts, which subject athletes to numerous discourses implicated in how they experience participation. Critical approaches have been used to examine interaction of gender, sexuality, and sport/exercise (Gill & Kamphoff, 2010; Krane, Waldron, Kauer, & Semerjian, 2010); masculinity, disability, and sport (Smith, 2013); race, gender, and sport (Butryn, 2009; Hall, 2001); age, masculinity, and sport (Ronkainen, Ryba, & Nesti, 2013); and ethnicity, class, sport, and exercise (Hanrahan, 2012; Schinke et al., 2012). The examples above highlight the research trends contributing to advancing intercultural understanding and just services in sport and exercise psychology.

In order to achieve the promise of sport to act as an agent of empowerment, rather than exploitation and oppression in our local and global communities, the recent ISSP Position Stand: *Culturally Competent Research and Practice in Sport and Exercise Psychology* (Ryba, Stambulova, Si, & Schinke, 2013) offered reflexive strategies to develop culturally sensitive and just sport and exercise psychology projects. Building on previous work in the area, Ryba and colleagues urged scholars working with culturally diverse populations, to engage with the ethics of difference to avoid replicating the power imbalances that such work often seeks to redress. The authors proposed to take cultural praxis seriously in attempts to counter marginalisation and social injustice through theory, research and applied work. The following is an example of a cultural praxis project in Tanzania.

Practical example

One issue related to social justice is an equal access to HIV/AIDS education regardless of one's societal position. The project selected as an example (Maro et al., 2009) is conducted in Tanzania – the country where about 60% of new HIV infections yearly refer to youths 15–25 years. The socio-cultural-economic conditions in Tanzania that facilitate HIV risk behaviours in youths (e.g. early sexual experiences, having multiple sex partners, a lack of awareness about HIV, and resistance to use condoms) are characterised by poorness of the population, high death rate, parents' separation (or death) increasing number of orphans not having access to school education, reported low effectiveness of the national system of HIV/AIDS diagnosis, prevention, and education. The authors suggested a new way to educate disadvantaged Tanzanian youths in HIV prevention using a soccer context and peer coaches built from the community-based soccer programme called EMIMA. Within EMIMA 50 peer coaches were trained to teach not only soccer skills, but also HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge and strategies. Another 50 peer coaches in addition were trained in how to implement mastery motivational climate in their soccer teams. The two groups of peer coaches recruited their teams that formed two soccer treatment groups called "regular" and "mastery". The two control groups were formed from children receiving HIV/AIDS education at school and homeless children without any formal education. Altogether 764 boys and girls of 12–15 years old took part. The two treatment soccer groups took part in an eight-week intervention programme aimed at developing knowledge, attitudes, and efficacy in HIV/AIDS prevention. The "school" group was involved in regular school education on the topic, and the "out of school" group did not receive any treatment. Before and after the eight-week intervention, all the participants were assessed in terms of HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and efficacy. Comparing the four groups only in two soccer groups, especially in the "mastery" group, the HIV/AIDS education was effective contrasted with the school programme and no education.

Consideration of research practices and future challenges

One of the critiques of sport for development is that some programmes are imposed on disadvantaged communities, disregarding indigenous cultural knowledge and ways of being, manifesting in limited community engagement and shared ownership (Kidd, 2008; Schinke & Lidor, 2013). Analysing the history of the emancipatory Western crusade, before the sport for development movement went viral, postcolonial scholars asserted that development is always context-bound and culturally defined (Said, 1978; Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1999). Research approaches examining the psychosocial impact of sport from the perspective of sociocultural diversity, taken by critical scholars in our field, continue to be relevant albeit challenging at the level of ethical and moral commitments enacted in everyday practices. Addressing the issue of research being implicated in intellectual colonisation of non-Western subjectivities, Ryba and Schinke (2009) edited a

special issue of the *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* relating decolonising methodologies that emerged out of Indigenous scholarship, to cultural praxis projects. In the context of sport for development, this translates into the process of neutralising unequal power relations that operate in Eurocentric discourses of "research" and "development" through all stages of programme design and implementation, paying meticulous attention to building participatory and viable academic-community partnerships. A major challenge facing researchers and practitioners appears to be in utilising decolonising methodologies to promote empowerment, sociocultural equity, and sustainability by linking local knowledge to theoretically informed cultural praxis projects. A step to navigate culturally informed scholarship is made in the career transition topic by creating a new paradigm: *cultural praxis of athletes' careers* (Stambulova & Ryba, 2014). This paradigm is a set of principles to stimulate career projects blending theory, research, and practice in studying athletes as whole people having multi-dimensional identities, situated in relevant athletic and non-athletic life contexts.

Sport for health and well-being

Since ancient times, sport has been connected with health and well-being. Worldwide research in the second half of the twentieth century and thereafter, established physical activity as a leading determinant of global health. Recently, the World Health Organization (2010) identified physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6% of deaths globally) after blood pressure (13%), tobacco use (9%), and high blood glucose (6%), while overweight and obesity cause 5% of global mortality. A more recent international study revealed that physical inactivity causes 9% of global premature mortality, an effect similar to that of smoking and obesity (Lee et al., 2012). Benefits for active adults include lower rates of all-cause mortality, coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, colon and breast cancer, hip or vertebral fracture, obesity, and depression (World Health Organization, 2010). Sport organisations have yet to develop strategies promoting health through sport. Although the International Olympic Committee recognises the importance of physical activity and sports for global health (Mountjoy et al., 2011), most spectators of Olympic Games and other sport events are not regular sport participants. Worldwide, 80% of adolescents do not meet the 60 min of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) per day, while the proportion of inactive adults varies widely across countries from 4.7% in Bangladesh to 71.9% in Malta (Hallal et al., 2012).

The ancient saying "a healthy mind in a healthy body" is regularly used in connection to sport. Youth sport is perceived to promote enjoyment, psychological well-being, and mental health. Although research evidence of a positive relationship between physical activity and mental health in childhood and adolescence is emerging, the effects sizes and research designs have often been described as weak (Biddle & Asare, 2011). Psychological factors, which are associated with young athletes' experiences of failure, lead to sport attrition (Balish, McLaren, Rainham, & Blanchard, 2014), with dropout rates for youth sport programmes ranging from 30% to 35% annually (Delorme, Chalabaev, & Raspaud, 2011; Petlichkoff, 1996). Sport psychologists argue that it is not sport per se that affects athletes' psychological well-being, but how sport is structured and how significant others behave towards athletes that determine the valence of athletes' emotional experiences and sport dropout or prolonged engagement (European Federation of Sport Psychology, 1996; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008; Weiss & Bredemeier, 1983).

Brief overview of work in the area

Despite the belief that engaging in a sport inspires a physically active lifestyle, there are few studies with rigorous methodologies on this topic. Several popular sports such as soccer entails

high levels of physical activity (Faude et al., 2010; Krustrup et al., 2010), but few scholars have examined whether participation in these sports covers youngsters' needs of 60 min of MVPA per day. Wickel and Eisenmann (2007) found that youth basketball, soccer, and American flag soccer contributed a substantial amount of MVPA (∼26 min) to a child's total daily MVPA, but this amount was not maintained on a non-sport day. A recent survey across five European countries suggests that young soccer players have a higher level of MVPA than same-age adolescents of a randomly selected reference sample (Wold et al., 2013). Across three European countries most youth soccer players met the requirement of 60 min of MVPA per day, but time each day sitting behind a desk and not moving was high and similar to adolescents of the same age who are not athletes (Van Hoye et al., 2013).

Most sport systems, at least among Western societies, do not target the promotion of long-term physical activity and they do not ensure long-term sport involvement for young athletes, as the high percentages of sport attrition indicate (Delorme et al., 2011; Petlichkoff, 1996). The latest review on sport withdrawal reveals that negative correlates to dropout include a task-involving climate created by coaches and peers, perceived competence, perception of autonomy support, perception of relatedness support, intrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation for accomplishment, intention to participate in sport, the value of sport, and positive expectancies of a future in sport (Balish et al., 2014). On the other hand, positive correlates of sport attrition are age, amotivation, intention to dropout and conflict between sport and non-sport activities. These findings align with self-determination theory (SDT; see Ryan & Deci, 2000), suggesting that empowering climates created by coaches and peers, such as task-involving climates that emphasise mastery, autonomy, and relatedness are likely to increase athletes' intrinsic motivation in sport and correspondingly intention to continue participating in sport while reducing intention to dropout (Quested et al., 2013). Researchers in sport attrition should employ SDT in connection with other social cognitive models explaining physical activity, such as those reviewed by Plotnikoff, Costigan, Karunamuni, and Lubans (2013), while correlates at other analytic levels (biological, institutional, community, and policy) should also be examined (Balish et al., 2014). Canadian studies suggest that smaller size communities are more likely to facilitate sport involvement (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Mac-Donald, 2010), while larger size communities have strong effects on sport withdrawal (Turnnidge, Hancock, & Côté, 2014). These studies should be replicated across countries, especially in non-western and financially impoverished regions.

Sport psychology research on sport continuation and dropout is related with investigations of athletes' well-being. Research based on motivational theories such as SDT and achievement goals theory (AGT) suggest that task-involving climates and sport environments supporting athletes' needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, sustain high levels of intrinsic motivation and self-determination, which has positive effects on athletes' psychological well-being (e.g. Reinboth & Duda, 2006). Observational research across three European countries revealed that soccer coaches were more likely to support a need-supporting than a need-thwarting environment (Tessier et al., 2013), which aligns with participation in soccer being positively associated with psychological well-being in these countries (Papaioannou et al., 2013) and results suggesting a positive association between physical activity and well-being in childhood and adolescence across countries (Biddle & Asare, 2011; Lubans, Plotnikoff, & Lubans, 2012). Evidence reveals room for improvement of coaching behaviours that promote athletes' well-being; particularly, the increase of coaches' support of athletes' autonomy and the decrease in coach controlling behaviours (Tessier et al., 2013).

Practical example

Based on AGT and their previous work on coach effectiveness training, Smith, Smoll, and Cumming (2007) developed a programme called a Mastery Approach to Coaching (MAC), which is useful in the

creation of coach-induced task-involving climate and the promotion of young athletes' well-being. This programme helps coaches focus on the increase of their positive reinforcement, mistake-contingent encouragement, corrective instruction given in a positive and encouraging fashion, sound technical instruction, reinforcement of effort and athletes' encouragement to learn from mistakes. Coaches also learn to focus on the enhancement of mutual supportiveness and team solidarity and to avoid punishment for mistakes and non-reinforcement of positive behaviours. The MAC programme conceptualises success as becoming the best one can be rather than outperforming others, emphasises personal improvement and the importance of fun and provides instructions about individualised attention to all athletes and goal-setting for personal improvement. The authors taught this programme to 20 basketball coaches who applied it to adolescent athletes in 10 boys' and 10 girls' teams in the western USA. The authors measured athletes' anxiety and perceived motivational climate before coaches' training in the MAC programme and 12 weeks after coaches' training. In comparison to a control group of basketball athletes in 11 boys and 6 female teams who were trained by 17 coaches who did not know anything about the MAC programme, after the intervention the athletes in the experimental group had reduced anxiety and higher perceptions of a mastery-oriented climate in their team. Similar programmes have been developed in other parts of the world, such as the European PAPPA Project described by Duda and colleagues aiming at the creation of empowering coaching climates and the promotion of young athletes' well-being (Duda et al., 2013).

Consideration of research practices and future challenges

Participation in sport has positive effects on health and psychological well-being, but further research is needed to understand how to keep people engaged in sport. Research on intrapersonal and interpersonal differences in sport continuation and sport attrition should be integrated with research on policies promoting sport involvement across different communities and countries. Sport policies should move beyond the present preoccupation with elite sport and also target the development of sport for all programmes that combine the enjoyment of sport involvement with the inclusion of all individuals. Research and interventions aiming to reduce sport attrition and increase long-term sport engagement should be integrated with research and policies targeting physical activity across the age-span. The increased interest in adults' community-based sports, such as curling in Canada (Takenaka & Zaichkowsky, 2014), deserve further attention from researchers with regard to the contribution of adults' community-based sport on health and well-being. We also need research from various sports and with people from different ages to develop a broader picture regarding the contribution of each sport on health-enhancing physical activity and well-being across the lifespan. More rigorous methodologies might combine objective and subjective measures of physical activity, coaches' behaviours, and motivational climate in sport.

The weak effects of sport on athletes' well-being and the significant room for improvement in empowering climates and coaching behaviours affecting athletes' well-being pose challenges to researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers who should collaborate to accomplish this goal. Sport interventions aiming to promote long-term sport and physical activity involvement and athletes' well-being should be the norm across sport levels, while policy-makers should rigorously assess the effects of these policies. Sport achieves its social mission of health and well-being when participants return from sport happy, determined, and knowledgeable of how to continue being physically active in spite of adversities.

Sport for positive youth development

Positive youth development promotes ideas on how to help young people to develop life skills and realise their full potential in a competent, healthy, and socially desirable manner. "By its

nature, positive youth development is a broad notion that includes the development of diverse competencies that can help a young person in sport, in their current life and/or in their future" (Gould & Carson, 2008, p. 59). During the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of sport programmes built on the belief that sport participation can facilitate youth development (Gould & Carson, 2008; Lintunen & Gould, 2014). Researchers and practitioners believe that if sport programmes are structured correctly, and youth are trained by caring adult mentors (coaches, instructors, and sport psychology consultants), positive youth development is more likely (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005; Petitpas, Cornelius, & Van Raalte, 2008).

Participation in sport programmes can impact the development of children and youth in three areas (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008). One area is used to target developing personal characteristics, such as motor and sport-specific skills, improving health, fitness, and an overall sense of physical well-being, and building character in the form of discipline, teamwork, and responsibility. A second area of impact focuses upon "at-risk" populations by constituting their lives around mainstream values and goals, removing these people from the streets into an adult-supervised environment, teaching self-control, and providing them with positive adult role models. A third impact is to foster social capital leading to future occupational success and civic engagement, facilitating the formation of social networks, and fostering life aspirations. Through these means, sport participation can benefit youth in their physical, psychological, emotional, and social development (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Lintunen & Gould, 2014).

Overview of work in the area

Despite the strong belief that participation in sport programmes has a positive impact on youth development, the number of studies examining the effectiveness of existing programmes is small (for two examples, see Bailey, 2005; Hanrahan, 2012). Research on the relationship between sport and youth development has led scholars to conclude that the relationship depends on other factors. Coakley (2011) posited: "by itself, the act of sport participation among young people leads to no regularly identifiable development outcomes" (p. 309). Outcomes are dependent on sport type, orientation and actions of peers, parents, coaches, and programme administrators, material, and cultural contexts under which the participation occurs, the manner in which sport experiences are integrated into one's life, and changing definitions and interpretations of sport experiences that occur during one's life.

In a recent longitudinal study, two physical activity/sport programmes were examined: a partnership between HSBC in the Community, the Outward Bound Trust, and five schools local to HSBC's UK head office in the Docklands areas of London (HSBC/OB) and the Sky Sports Living For Sport (SSLfS). These programmes were assessed to identify the key features in their designs central to the sustained positive impact of sport participation and on the re-engagement of disaffected youth (Armour, Sandford, & Duncombe, 2013). The HSBC/OB project ran for five years. The SSLfS Project is an on-going national initiative within the UK that encourages schools to design and run projects within a broad framework developed by the programme sponsors. An evaluation framework was developed based on a range of individualised methods, including individual student profiling, school-level case studies, and the creation of programme logic models. The researchers suggested that six features be embedded in the design of sport programmes aimed at positive youth development: matching students' needs with programme objectives, locating project activities outside school contexts, working closely with students to select activities, set goals, and review progress, establishing positive relationships between programme leaders and the students, offering the participants an opportunity to work with and for other youth, on-going.

Practical example

The programmes, established to strengthen the association between physical/sport activities and positive youth development, have increased over the last 30 years (see Coakley, 2011; Hellison & Walsh, 2002). Among these programmes are Midnight Basketball (Bessone, 1991), a game programme with Mexican teenage orphans (Hanrahan, 2012), and the Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (Danish, 2002). One of the earliest programmes aimed at helping youth take more personal responsibility – conceptualised as self-motivation and goal-setting, and social/moral responsibility – conceptualised as respect for others and helping others, is the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) through physical activity (see Hellison, Martinek, & Walsh, 2008). The TPSR programme is based on a positive instructor–participant relationship. The instructor and the participant have goals framed with the main objective of helping youth take more personal responsibility. The goals for the participants are as follows: developing self-control (e.g. to respect others' rights and feelings, control one's temper and language, and solve conflicts peacefully), self-motivation (e.g. effort and persistence), self-direction (e.g. independence and on-task, and goal-setting and follow-up), helping others and developing leadership without receiving rewards, and transferring what has been learned to other life areas (e.g. role modelling for younger kids). To encourage personal and social responsibility, the programme is based on two instructional strategies: those integrating each objective into physical activity content, and those solving problems, such as accountability or conflict.

Consideration of research practices and future challenges

As Gould and Carson (2008) proposed: "in the life skills development through sport area, research lags behind applied efforts" (p. 59). Therefore, it is important to further develop research-informed life skills/positive youth development programmes-involving sport/exercise activities. To ensure effectiveness of these programmes, a holistic developmental perspective (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004) that considers the participants as multi-dimensional people with different life roles/identities and future plans should become a basis for the learning process and transferability of competencies. Positive youth development programmes should also be context-sensitive and assist young people to meet their current and future needs. To achieve this, a number of factors aforementioned in combination should be taken into account (see also Coakley, 2011; Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Furthermore, two more challenges should be met for youth to benefit most from participation. First, according to Coakley (2011), nearly all the research on sport participation and educational achievements has been conducted in the USA, where sport participation is part of the school system. If we aim to increase understanding of the impact of sport programmes on positive youth development, research is needed on factors not associated with schools, such as social status among peers. Second, since the transfer of skills is considered to be a factor in positive youth sport programmes, more effort could be made to assess the effectiveness of the strategies adopted to enhance transferability. Strategies such as designing conditions to enhance transfer before the activity begins, providing opportunities for reflection, and ensuring that follow-up experiences take place to enhance and reinforce learning (see Armour et al., 2013), and strategies that facilitate transfer should be studied. One strategy that can promote transfer is to link the sport programme with other activities where youth take part, such as family activities.

Sport for peace

In April 1972, a Pan Am 707 landed in Detroit, Michigan, carrying the People's Republic of China's world champion table tennis team for a series of matches and tours in 10 cities in the USA (DeVoss,

2002). What has been termed the era of Ping-Pong diplomacy began 12 months earlier when the American team participated in the 31st World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan. While there, they received an invitation to visit the People's Republic by their fellow Chinese competitors. The USA welcomed this opportunity, as until this formal invitation, no Americans delegation had been invited to China since 1949, when China became a Communist government. A few months after the World Table Tennis Championships, USA President Richard Nixon visited China, a journey that became one of the most important events in the USA post-war history.

Since the era of Ping-Pong diplomacy, national and international sport organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations, universities, and schools have attempted to use organised and supervised sport programmes as a vehicle to foster relationships among individuals/communities from conflicting cultures (see Kidd, 2008; Lidor & Blumenstein, 2011). Almost three decades after the era of Ping-Pong diplomacy, the UN officially recognised the potential of sport as a strategy for achieving international development goals and promoting peace (Beutler, 2008; Schnitzer, Stephenson, Zanotti, & Stivachtis, 2013). These organisations assumed by that designated sport programmes can provide individuals/communities from conflicting cultures, such as Jewish and Arab populations in Israel, or Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, with the opportunity to interact in an activity that is mutually attractive.

Overview of work in the area

Although sport is increasingly regarded as a powerful agent in international development, and it has been used during the last 20 years as a vehicle for promoting understanding and peace among individuals/communities from conflicting cultures, few studies can be found (see Kidd, 2008; Schnitzer et al., 2013). Within these projects, data were often collected via the use of pre- and post-programme questionnaires and by interviewing, at programme's end. These data were then analysed qualitatively, revealing how the participants described their post-programme perceptions of the conflicting culture. Comparisons of descriptions about each other were then made pre- and post-programme in the hopes of improved trust.

In one study by Galily, Leitner, and Shimion (2013), the attitudes of Jewish and Arab basketball and soccer players were examined via questionnaires administered before and after cooperative sport programmes. Three different sport programmes initiated and supervised by three different non-governmental organisations – Mifalot, Peres Center for Peace, and Friendship Games, were assessed. Positive changes were reported from pre- to post-test in trust, hatred towards the other group, and perceived level of hatred of the other group. It was recommended that in-depth interviews and focus groups be used to gain a richer understanding of participants' attitudes and the ways to effect positive change.

In a peace study in Beslan, Russia, soccer was implemented as part of a qualitative study to promote peace among survivors following a 2004 terrorist attack. Eight UK based staff and two Russian project translators took part in the study. Each British interviewee also participated in a focus group. The researchers found that soccer-based interventions can be beneficial. However, it was emphasised that it is important to consider contextual nuances, cultural significance, and any necessary conditions when using sport in peace-building. Understanding of regional context permits researchers and programme leaders to develop meaningful questions, understanding, and interventions.

Practical example

Israel is a multicultural state composed of more than 7 million residents: 5.5 million Jewish citizens, 1.5 million Arab citizens, and 300,000 recent immigrants, mostly from Northern Africa and

Eastern Europe (Statistical Aspects of Israel, 2006). Israel is surrounded by four Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and only has diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan. Israel also has political conflict with the Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. Since Israel's establishment in 1948, the Israelis and Palestinians have struggled to cooperate (Lidor & Blumenstein, 2011; Sorek, 2007). These populations mostly reside in separate communities, with few social-political links.

Soccer is the most popular sport among both populations. Attempts are being made to soccer to repair relations. The Twinned Peace Football Schools Project – Sport in the Service of Peace, Mifalot's Sport for Education, Development, and Peace Program, and Football for Peace [F4P] (see Lidor & Blumenstein, 2011) have been initiated by non-governmental organisations to build peace among Jews and Arabs. The professionals involved in these programmes are coaches, educators, policy-makers, and sport psychology consultants. The F4P (see Lidor & Blumenstein, 2011; Sugden, 2007) is led by the University of Brighton and the British Council, and focuses on value-based soccer coaching to build bridges between Jewish and Arab cities in the Galilee. The coaches participate in pre-summer preparation held at the University of Brighton to become familiar with the Programmes' objectives. The F4P emphasises five principles (see Lambert, 2007): neutrality – players, coaches, parents are not allowed to express their ideological and political agendas; quality and inclusion – participants are treated equally regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or ability; respect – the appreciation of one's own individuality and the values of others; trust – learning to have faith in the abilities of others; and responsibility – understanding that an individual's behaviour in practices and games effects the experiences of others. The F4P Program takes place during the summer break, in northern Israel.

Considerations of research practices and future challenges

To facilitate peace among individuals/communities from conflicting cultures, certain processes are needed, among them promoting human rights, implementing proportionate policing procedures, and providing services and programmes. Sport programmes can build peace, however such programmes ought to be part of a larger approach. We propose two steps to increase understanding of the value of sport in promoting peace: the adoption of more systematic data collection and data analysis in order to understand facilitators and impediments, and the establishment of a visible link between the given sport programme and the local cultural–political peace process (see Schinke, Smith, & McGannon, 2013).

Postulates and recommendations

In this paper, we have overviewed an evolution of ideas emphasising social missions through sport and detail contributions of sport and exercise psychology research and practice into facilitating intercultural exchange and social justice, peoples' health and well-being, positive youth development and peace. Below we summarise the quintessence of this paper with 11 postulates:

(1) Social missions can be defined as peoples' ideas, acts, and processes that initiate and promote social changes leading to betterment for individuals, groups, communities, countries, and world regions. Competitive sport and exercise activities create contexts for social missions exemplified in this paper by facilitating intercultural exchange and social justice, health and well-being, positive youth development, and peace. Therefore, the ISSP aims to increase awareness among scholars about possibilities to initiate, serve, and promote social missions through sport and exercise.

(2) Depending on how sport and exercise contexts are constructed and managed determines whether they lead to positive social changes. These contexts might be nutritive for undesirable social changes, such as cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings between cultural communities, decrease in peoples' motivation to healthy lifestyle, exploitation, cheating and other forms of unfair behaviours contributing to negative youth development, and other consequences. Therefore, the ISSP emphasises that special efforts be made by athletes, exercisers, and by all people supporting them, such as coaches, parents, sport science experts, managers, journalists to reduce the negative trajectories and turn sport and exercise into positively nutritive contexts.

(3) Social projects initiated in sport and exercise contexts can be positioned in regard to two contemporary lines relating "sport" and "development". The first line is termed "sport development" and covers projects that facilitate development of sport and physical activity, specific sport events, athletes and exercisers, teams, coaches and sport/exercise organisations. Major outcomes of these projects are changes in sport or physical activity. The second line represented by the international platform "sport for development" focuses on sport and exercise as a means to promote social values and changes (i.e. social missions). Through this position stand, the ISSP situates itself as an international sport psychology organisation supporting "sport for development" projects widening the social impact of sport and exercise psychology.

(4) As a scientific field, sport and exercise psychology was born at the same time as the modern Olympic movement, and not surprisingly adopted virtue ethics, excellence of any kind (physical, mental, and spiritual), benefits for all (i.e. societal goods) and other Olympic ideas and values. Presently, there is an increasing interest to conduct socially influential projects in sport/exercise contexts but professionals are not always well equipped theoretically and methodologically to meet challenges related to such projects. Through this position stand, the ISSP promotes general principles as well as domain specific competencies needed to conduct sport/exercise psychology projects serving social missions.

(5) Principles to follow in a high-quality "sport for development" projects include (a) planning for the project by first understanding the needs of people/communities involved, to then set up relevant project goals that meet these needs (i.e. a participant-centred approach), (b) understanding the historical–social–cultural contexts of the participants' lives and considering these contexts as constituting the participants' identities and facilitating meaning-making of their activities and behaviours (i.e. a context-sensitive and bounded approach), (c) promoting inclusiveness and ethics disregarding stereotypes and power superiority (i.e. an inclusiveness approach), (d) recognising not only the project's direct impact on its participants, but also indirect influences on non-participants, such as non-sport peers or family members (i.e. an anticipation of echo-effect approach), (e) employing theories, research or applied methods developed for relevant participants/contexts or nuancing evidence-based existing frameworks and methods to better fit the project participants in their contexts (i.e. a culturally safe methodological approach), (f) continuous reflection on the process – evaluating short- and long-term effects of the project (an evaluative approach). Scholars should also situate themselves in relation to the context and participants, keeping in mind that cultural insiders are expected to play key roles in the project to ensure its success, and cultural outsiders should support these efforts and correct any tendencies that might impede (i.e. a culturally reflexive approach).

(6) Social projects should be undertaken locally. Presently, despite a breadth of projects, many falter because they are created from outside the context, and staff are provided

training in contextually unsuitable – top-down approaches. Social projects should be sites for cultural praxis, where the identities and daily living practices of participants living in communities, countries, and regions are centralised and living conditions are enhanced. Successful projects reveal local flavour, build local capacity, and culminate in self-governed programmes.

(7) "Sport for development" projects aimed at serving *intercultural exchange and social justice* promote sport and exercise as inclusive and culturally safe settings for all but also contribute to better mutual understanding and acceptance of difference between people and societies. Usually, these projects deal with marginalised and vulnerable populations (e.g. women, LGBT communities, immigrants, the Indigenous) to illuminate and meet specific needs, such as equal rights, acceptance by the majority, integration to the host culture, and to correct unequal power relations. Therefore, cultural praxis projects utilising decolonising methodologies through blending theory/research and practice with the participants' lived culture are recommended.

(8) "Sport for development" projects aimed at serving a *health and well-being mission* promote sport and exercise as inherent components of healthy lifestyle beneficial for body and mind. These projects are usually addressed to target groups including young athletes, exercisers, and the sedentary. The major focus of such projects is on internal (e.g. motivation and self-efficacy) and external (e.g. social and professional support) conditions facilitating involvement, enjoyment, and positive body–mind and behavioural/lifestyle changes. An area still neglected within this mission is how to promote elite sport as a healthy setting.

(9) Projects aimed at *positive youth development* educate young people about life skills, facilitating their acquisition, performance, and transferability. Usually, these projects are in the form of education/training that complements regular school or sport activities. Successful projects (a) apply a holistic perspective on participants' development that view them as multi-dimensional people executing different roles/activities in their life and having relevant identities, (b) carefully investigate developmental needs of the participants having in mind the contexts they are imbedded in as well as their past experiences, present situation and anticipated future, and (c) create life skills that meet the participants current needs and prepare them for foreseeable transitions.

(10) Sport and exercise psychology projects aspiring to facilitate *peace through sport* might aid by organising conditions that dispel stereotypes and increase mutual understanding and acceptance among the participants representing different sides in an inter-group (culture, religion) conflict. Although "sport for peace" is known since the ancient Olympic Games, few projects promoting this social mission are conducted in sport and exercise psychology. Usually, these projects are applied and consist of popular sport programmes in which the universal language of sport and games is used as a basis for human dialogue and cooperation. Conditions facilitating positive impact of such projects include (a) inclusiveness and equal treatment of the participants, (b) developing an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and responsibility, but with a moratorium on expressing the participants' ideological or political agendas, (c) attention to contextual nuances and historical roots of the conflict, and (d) connection to other forces (people, organisations) committed to peaceful conflict resolution. One of the most challenges in these projects is the culturally safe and on-going evaluation of their short-term and long-terms effects.

(11) The social missions through sport emphasised in this paper are not exhaustive, nor discrete. One project might embrace several social missions promoting sport and exercise contexts as socially important and valuable. The ISSP sees its mission in motivating

scholars to enrich their thinking and professional philosophies with the ideas to initiate, conduct, and evaluate projects that increase the social value and impact of sport and exercise psychology.

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